

THE
FOLLIES OF FASHION;

A COMEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF GLENGALL.

LONDON :

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1830.

Harper's Dictionary Public 1

PRINTED BY A. J. VALPY, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

PROLOGUE,

WRITTEN BY MR. F. MILLS.

SPOKEN BY MR. COOPER.

THE Court is ready—Prompter cry “ O yes ;”
Proclaim aloud that sense demands redress.
Fashion’s arraign’d, and we this garb assume,
To plead for mercy, and await our doom.
But yet her follies are not purely ours—
Whose are they, prithee, then ? perhaps, Sir, yours .
No, I’ve the plea of youth,—I, Sir, of years.
(*Aside.*) How true to nature ! Cubs grow up to bears !
Or yours, fair lady ! in the motley dress,
Where nothing’s simple, save the nakedness.
“ Ho ! turn him out : who is this caustic fool
“ That lends himself as some poor author’s tool ?
“ His own the folly, that his text explains :
“ He is the fool—we’ll damn him for his pains.”

From such, indeed, no favour can we ask :
Who runs at game, must gird him for the task ;

We're well prepared, like hunger-whetted hounds,
The scent breast-high, where fashion most abounds.

(to dress circle.)

The quarry's roused—ye, sportsmen, high and low,

(to pit and galleries.)

As we give tongue, oh! gaily cheer us now.

Fashion! and well ye know the power that awes,
Will, like the beggars, have a king and laws.

We too, who minister to taste, must know,

At times, to bend subservient to the beau.—

“What boots it be the judgment right or wrong?

“We know ye'll conquer, and we own ye strong;

“When pirouettes from France can please ye so,

“And all your taste just *turns upon the toe!*

“When *elves* and *elephants* with *horses* meet,

“And most they're greeted *who have cloven feet!*

“When proofs of sapience a *proboscis* shows,

“That ye may *tell the critic by his nose!*

“When black mustachios, and a butcher's knife,

“A brace of pistols, and a brigand's wife,

“Draw down 'in furrows tears of tenderness,

“Could Siddons more! can Kemble now do less!!

In pity deem it not a prayer misplaced,

In this extreme inclemency of taste,

That we, Thalia's sons, half starved I doubt,

Should crave compassion ere we're *frozen out.*

Though nature's monsters now are all the rage,
And Heaven knows who is next to tread the stage,
We can but show ye, for a double face,
Some worldly Janus of the Surface race.
But I, as here I stand, 'twixt hope and fear,
See dragons' teeth and hydras' heads appear,
Whilst *he* seems wanting of the friendly few
Who had a hundred hands, and *used* them too.

Ye, then, with honest hands and homely sense,
Who rail at fashion, as ye hate pretence ;
Should ye behold such as have made their trade
To wrong ye in your image here portray'd ;
If that to mirth we move ye as of yore,
In this good cause, oh ! give us "*one cheer more !*"

[*The lines distinguished by inverted commas were omitted.*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD SPLASHTON.	- - - - -	<i>Mr. Wallack.</i>
SIR HARRY LUREALL.	- - -	<i>Mr. Jones.</i>
COUNTER.	- - - - -	<i>Mr. Farren.</i>
SIR SIMON FOSTER.	- - - -	<i>Mr. Bennett.</i>
GEORGE FOSTER.	- - - - -	<i>Mr. Cooper.</i>
MAJOR O'SIMPER.	- - - - -	<i>Mr. H. Wallack.</i>

LADY SPLASHTON.	- - - - -	<i>Miss Mordaunt.</i>
LADY MARY FRETFUL.	- - - -	<i>Miss Faucit.</i>
MRS. COUNTER.	- - - - -	<i>Mrs. Glover.</i>
EMILY.	- - - - -	<i>Mrs. Newcombe.</i>
JENNY TRINKET.	- - - - -	<i>Mrs. Orger.</i>
FLIMSY.	- - - - -	<i>Mrs. Webster.</i>

SERVANTS, MASQUES, MUSIC, &c. &c.

Time of Representation, two hours and forty minutes.

DRURY LANE, Nov. 29th, 1829.



FOLLIES OF FASHION.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

LADY MARY FRETFUL'S *house*.—*A toilette ; a table.*

LADY MARY *discovered writing ; her maid,*
FLIMSY, *standing.*

LADY MARY. Well, never was any thing so provoking ! I positively have not patience to survive such an event—I, who thought my gown would have been the admiration of the whole room last night, to find that vulgar citizen's wife, Mrs. Counter, in precisely the same style of dress. A French embroidered tissue ! the last novelty from Paris ! Life is too short to bear such torments ; but

thank heaven, I have one consolation left; mine was gold, hers was only silver: otherwise I must have fainted.

FLIMSY. It's quite disgusting, my Lady; such doings ought not to be allowed by law. Could not your Ladyship have a bill brought into parliament to prevent the eastern ladies from adopting the new French fashions, until the western belles of quality have laid them aside, under a penalty of the offending creatures being confined to their own side of Temple Bar for the season?

LADY MARY. A remarkably good idea, Flimsy; you would make an excellent member of parliament. I'll order some country gentleman, who wants tickets to Almacks for three ugly daughters, to bring in the bill at once.—Pshaw! this note will not do. (*Tears it, and begins another.*)

FLIMSY. Lord, Ma'am, there's no knowing how far the cits' wives may attempt to carry their resemblances; they have already tried to ape your genteel vices, and, perhaps, will now endeavour to imitate your fashionable virtues. Things can never go on thus,—some decided line must be drawn, Ma'am.

LADY MARY. Very true—I have not philosophy sufficient to support me against such purse-proud arrogance.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Sir Harry Lureall, to wait on your Ladyship.

(LADY MARY tears a note as advancing.)

Enter LUREALL.

LADY MARY. Oh, my dear Sir Harry, I am delighted you are come.

LUREALL. I kiss your Ladyship's hand.

LADY MARY. (to servants.) Chairs. You need not wait, but d'ye hear, let no one in without first inquiring whether I am at home or not.

(*Exeunt servants, significantly to each other.*)

LUREALL. Your Ladyship is quite right—we must not be disturbed, for we have a vast quantity of business to arrange, and that of the deepest importance. You will hardly believe it, but some very credible reports have absolutely got into circulation, and what is extraordinary, they have *point* in them too.

LADY MARY. I assure you they are not mine,

for to you I may own that I do every now and then (against an enemy) draw a little upon my—imagination.

LUREALL. True, and always with effect; but on those occasions I should imagine, from the mass of embroidery your acquaintance so liberally work into your original manufacture, that your Ladyship must sometimes find it difficult to recognise *your own story*.

LADY MARY. No doubt; and in disputing with them respecting the *real facts*, I often find that I am on the point of acknowledging myself as the authoress, by way of deciding the argument in my own favour, as if I must not know my own story better than they. (*Both laugh.*)—But what reports do you allude to?

LUREALL. It is rumoured that I am attentive to Lady Splashton; and Lord Splashton's frequent visits here have also been remarked.

LADY MARY. Envy has made them keensighted; but we are too much the fashion to mind such faint attacks. Could Major O'Simper or Mrs. Counter have been busy?

LUREALL. Oh no! There is not ingenuity enough

in the reports for the former, and too much for the latter. The Major has some talent for invention, but his embellishment is really scientific. Mrs. Counter is only a repeater—a species of midwife to embryo scandal, who ushers into the world the fictions which others have created. She thinks it genteel.

LADY MARY. If it were Mrs. Counter, one well-aimed dart of my keenest ridicule should strike her off the ladder by which she hopes to mount into good society. We must act. My power over Lord Splashton increases hourly. I can never forget that he would have married me but for Lady Splashton's attractions.—I fear, however, that he still likes her: you must destroy that feeling by making him jealous of Foster.

LUREALL. As his Lordship sees merely through my eyes, consider him as already inoculated with that infectious disorder of the head.

LADY MARY. Disappointment and revenge on her who triumphed over me, unite to drive me on. Tell me, are his affairs better or worse?

LUREALL. Oh, deplorable! for a high-pressure Jew, of an hundred per cent. premium power, informs me that his Lordship's note of hand, though

indorsed by half his acquaintance, would not be more easily discounted, than a play-bill at twenty-one days after date.

LADY MARY. I am glad of it ; my fortune then will be more acceptable to him. All would I sacrifice for this uncontrollable weakness.

LUREALL. I wish she had taken this fancy for me. (*Aside.*)—My creditors too are becoming so impertinently curious respecting my imaginary finances, that I really must carry off Lady Splashton to keep up my own character ; fortunately, my Lord has been unable to disentangle her Ladyship from her estates.

LADY MARY. That remains for your superior talents hereafter.

LUREALL. True : I am, however, much annoyed by her uncle Sir Simon Foster's expected arrival in town. I have endeavoured to prevent it by writing letters to him denying Lord Splashton's irregularities, and George Foster's misdemeanours ; he considers me the only Solomon of the age, though the creature does not know me by sight.

LADY MARY. Which shows your skill. The necessity for acting decidedly becomes more ap-

parent. I wish immediately to see Lord Splashton. I have written two notes, but have torn them both.

LUREALL. So much the better, for be assured that to show impatience is the worst plan to obtain power over a lover. All which thwarts me is, that Lady Splashton, in defiance of fashionable etiquette, has evidently the strongest feeling for her husband. However, the bracelet story (of which I carefully informed her) has had a very marked effect; and if you will give me Lord Splashton's letter to you (which I dictated) I think I can turn it to our mutual advantage. *(She gives it.)*

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT. Miss Counter has called, my Lady.

LADY MARY. Show her in. *(Exit Servant.)*
Now I shall revenge myself comfortably on Mrs. Counter by persuading Emily to marry George Foster.

LUREALL. You will fall considerably in my estimation, if you have not a very interested motive for interfering in this silly love affair.

LADY MARY. You are going to be unjust; by

keeping George Foster in my power, I have a sure friend in Lady Splashton's house, who through his relationship with the family informs me of every thing which occurs in it.

LUREALL. Pardon me for suspecting your want of judgment in intrigue : I perceive evidently the use which can be made of so eligible a tool.

Enter EMILY.

LADY MARY. Dear Emily, I am delighted to see you. Do you know, my love, I should not be much surprised if another person was just to call upon me shortly.

EMILY. Really, I know nothing of any other person's intentions.

LADY MARY. Well, do not blush so much ; but if George Foster did happen to visit me at this moment, I should not die of astonishment. He is a charming young man ; you ought to be much flattered at his attentions to you.

LUREALL. I know he has refused one well-jointured Irish countess, two Cheltenham heresses, and a whole tribe of luxuriantly gilt Jewesses ; all only daughters, upon my honour.

LADY MARY. By all means marry him ; parti-

cularly as your friends dislike it, which I am sure was the only reason I had for marrying Mr. Fretful. That match turn'd out remarkably well, for now I am a gay widow.

EMILY. Why in truth my mind is made up..

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Mr. Foster, Madam.

LUREALL. { Oh, you innocent little angel!

LADY MARY. { ha! ha! ha!—(*She goes up.*)

Enter FOSTER.

LADY MARY. Upon my word, George, you are by no means gallant. Emily has been here this hour.

FOSTER. Upon my honour I had no idea—

LADY MARY. That Emily would be so exact.—Well, we have both been taking your part, both been strongly recommending you to her.

EMILY (*comes down to GEORGE FOSTER.*) I never heard so much in your praise before.

LUREALL. Allow me to suggest a chaise-and-four—it's a sovereign remedy in all cases of sentiment. Follow my advice, George! run off with Miss Emily at once.

FOSTER. Egad I should be too happy; but, unfortunately, I have not money enough to pay for the post-horses, unless I get it by annuity.

EMILY. Nor my consent!

LADY MARY. Nonsense, my dear! come, let us know something about your plans; perhaps with our experience we may be able to assist you.

FOSTER. We had better trust them as they are sincere friends. The fact is, strange as it may appear, Mr. and Mrs. Counter have set their hearts upon Emily's marrying a lord!!! (*All laugh.*) So finding my case hopeless, I have written to her father, to propose for her in the name of Lord Henry Drummond, my intimate friend: he, you remember, was also attentive to Emily when she was at Paris with your Ladyship; and as the old gentleman knows neither of us personally, I mean to present myself as Lord Henry, and carry off the prize.

LUREALL. But why wait for his consent?—When a lady is concerned, never ask until you cannot be refused—it's more honourable. •

FOSTER. Unfortunately Emily has promised her parents never to marry without their consent;

and her father, in case she keeps her word, has bound himself to give her thirty thousand pounds. If once they agree to our union, therefore, we shall demand the fulfilment of the contract.

LUREALL. You have given thirty thousand reasons, all indispensable to a gentleman about to commit matrimony.

LADY MARY. Excellent indeed, but dangerous.

FOSTER. But to guard against suspicion, as he knows of my being in England, I have got another letter ready to send, proposing for her in my own name. Of course I shall be refused, and then may safely attack the fortress under false colours.

LADY MARY. Or present yourself as the writer of whichever letter receives a favourable answer. A thought strikes me—Sir Harry Lureall shall be the bearer of your real letter—'twill give an air of sincerity to the business.

FOSTER. I shall be delighted—(*They go up*).

LUREALL. I present the letter!—(*Aside.*) Can it, in any degree, affect my personal interest? If Foster succeeds through me, he is bound to me for ever, and may be useful hereafter in pecuniary matters. If Counter refuses? I owe him too

much money to quarrel with him : in that case I have only to throw over young Foster.—Well, with all my heart ; I will present the letter, and exert myself seriously in your behalf. (*To Foster.*)

FOSTER. (*gives the letter.*) Thanks, thanks, my dear good friend ; but you must deliver it directly, for Lord Henry's letter is already gone.

LUREALL. But are you sure he does not know you by sight ?

FOSTER. Oh ! quite, he has not seen me for a considerable time. Recollect, I have been abroad these six years, since I was fifteen or sixteen.

EMILY. I am ready to die with apprehension.

LADY MARY. Oh courage, courage ! Why you can but fail, and then jump out of the window ; but as Sir Harry and I have particular business in town to-day—and my carriage is at the door—I must depart. So pray, Lord Henry, hand Miss Counter down stairs.

LUREALL. Oh ! pray give Lord Henry his proper precedence.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE II.

*A Street.**Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER.*

MAJOR. A pretty girl and thirty thousand pounds versus Counter's friendship, and his French cook! The thirty thousand pounds decides the argument. Dear, dear, what an ugly trick I have of being always talking to myself; I never have time to think at all. As to London friendship, after all 'tis only calculated by the number of times you dine at a man's house in the week. By my faith, if that powerful rich block-head, Sir Hercules Booby, was to destroy his pheasant shooting, and give up his new cook, he'd soon lose all his old friends. Is that my man Patrick I see? I left him watching Miss Counter. She ought to be on her return home by this time. I'll make a closer observation of the fair enemy.

*[Exit MAJOR.]**Enter EMILY and JENNY.*

EMILY. Make haste, make haste, for I am sure

I see Major O'Simper's servant following us : the Major must be near.

JENNY. Lord, Ma'am, and suppose he is ! The Major in my opinion is a very creditable lover for any young lady—such a handsome man, such a smart uniform, and such epaulettes, and such fine shoulders under them ! Besides, Ma'am, if Mr. Foster finds he has no rival, it may make a great difference, I assure you.

EMILY. Perhaps, Jenny, you may be right. Well, for the sake of amusement I will coquette this Major O'Simper—it will punish his insolence, and may also assist to keep Mr. George in order. Here he comes—tell him you have heard me praise him exceedingly—you may say I think him very handsome, and you may—marry him yourself if you like. [Exit EMILY.]

JENNY. If I like ! I should like it of all things ; more strange events have happen'd : I should not wonder. Mrs. Major O'Simper sounds remarkably genteel. Here he is.

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER. ' 1

MAJOR. Och ! so I have found you at last, my

little curl-twister. Sure, it's nobody else I see? Och! Jenny, my jewel, you are the pearl of London Abigails—you are a pattern for Hebe, a mould for Juno, and a model for Venus. By my honour and conscience, if Jupiter was to see you, he'd transform himself into an under-butler, to pay his court to you, you darling.

JENNY. An under-butler! then he'd have very little chance, I can tell you. I'd have you and Mr. Jupiter to know that a lady's gentlewoman does not keep company with livery servants.

MAJOR. Och! I beg your little dignity's pardon; but hark ye, I'll take care of you and your fortune in another way. I'll make a man of you entirely; for when I marry your mistress, I'll have you well married afterwards to some of the rich gentlemen captains on my Irish estates; but first you must assist me with Miss Emily—all depends on that shot.

JENNY. Upon those terms you may depend on me. I really think she likes you, for I heard her say yesterday that she thought you a "beautiful man"

MAJOR. A beautiful man! She is a constella-

tion of taste ; but I am afraid she also thinks George Foster “ a beautiful man.”

JENNY. Don't trouble yourself about him ; for I heard Mrs. Counter say that she knew nothing about him, and that Miss Emily had been persuaded to refuse him.

MAJOR. Och, that's choice news ! Here, my dear Jenny, take her this letter—it will elucidate the matter completely.

JENNY. I take a letter ! Oh no ! upon no account, unless I know what it contains inside.

MAJOR. You are right, so just give it to Miss Emily, and desire her to inform you of the contents. I could not now break the seal, and reading the outside is enough for you at first.

JENNY. Very true, Sir ; but you must be very careful not to speak to her much before company, or before Mr. or Mrs. Counter ; for if once you were suspected, it would be ruin. Send all your messages through me ; for as Miss Emily is very romantic, it will give her additional pleasure to deceive all her relations.

MAJOR. You are the queen of machination and circumspection.

/

JENNY. But it is not directed!

MAJOR. That's for fear it might get into wrong hands, or go astray any how: there can be no mistake now. It's lucky that she has a taste for romance too; for I begin the letter, "Lovely Minny."

JENNY. Lovely Ninny! what's that?

MAJOR. Oh botheration! no, Lovely Minny, the short for Minerva. I'll do as you desire—but bring me an answer, or I'll go for it myself—and meet me here this evening, you little pilot of my affections. *[Exit MAJOR.]*

JENNY. Ha! ha! ha! how easily he has fallen into my schemes! Now if I can but make my mistress behave rather civilly to him, until my plans are ready, who knows but I may succeed? At all events it shall not be for want of trying. Oh! I'll certainly marry him. *[Exit JENNY.]*

SCENE III.

COUNTER'S *House*.*Enter* MRS. COUNTER *and* EMILY.

MRS. COUNTER. Don't talk to me of your hearts, and your feelings, and your attachments—what business have you with such things? what occasion have you for such paraphernalia? You astonish me! Good trash indeed for Rosa Matilda to scribble about in a Sunday paper. When I married Mr. Counter, I had no such unnecessary nonsense in my head—besides no young lady of rank now-a-days ever troubles herself with those anti-diluvian prejudices. Love and affection are out of fashion: they, like short waists, have had their day; and as to sentiment, it's not admitted either into Almacks or Grosvenor Square.

EMILY. But when the happiness of one's life is concerned, surely fashion ought not to interfere to prevent it. Besides Mr. Foster lives in the best society, among the very persons whose acquaintance you desire so much to cultivate; and you must own that when I first wrote to you how

attentive he had been to me at Paris, you were much pleased at it, and had no objection.

MRS. COUNTER. True; but that was before Lord Glibly paid you attention; and now, Lord Henry Drummond puts him quite out of the question. Besides, he has never deigned to come near us—I do not even know him. In short, there are two good reasons why you cannot marry George Foster. In the first place, I say, you shan't—secondly, his father intends him to marry Miss Cruikshanks the heiress, whose estate joins his own, which is an unanswerable reason.

EMILY. Upon that principle I ought to marry Mr. Greasley, the eminent soap-boiler, whose highly-flavored factory joins papa's villa at Hackney.

MRS. COUNTER. No impudence, Miss! you shall give up Mr. Foster. At all events, I deny every where that you care about him. I am determined that you shall marry Lord Henry Drummond—yes, marry a Lord. The Counters shall boast at length of having a coronet in their family. What am I slaving to be the fashion for? and to live with the quality for, *but this*? Did I not marry

you last week to the Duke of Doncaster in the Morning Post, and this week to the Marquis of Harebrain in the Morning Herald? All this creates talk, and has its effect. Oh, here is your father.

EMILY. (*Aside.*) I see I must change my line of conduct, and deceive them. George is right—they are become too prejudiced. I have no other resource.

Enter MR. COUNTER.

MRS. COUNTER. What news, my dear?

COUNTER. Bad news. Scrip is low; omnium going; and the three and a half's are down, down.

MRS. COUNTER. I wish they were down the river. Do, pray, Mr. Counter, leave off talking city the moment you pass Temple Bar. The people at this genteel end of the town know nothing about your funds.

COUNTER. Not having a shilling in them, or any where else, perhaps: but I hope you have been talking to Emily seriously, not to be ridiculous.

MRS. COUNTER. Yes, I have represtented to her the folly of thinking of George Foster. , She cannot

do better than marry Lord Henry Drummond. Come, Emily, be reasonable.

EMILY. I am sure I wish to do whatever papa and mama desire.* Lord Henry was certainly very attentive to me when I was with Lady Mary at Paris last winter. He told me then he was desperately in love with me—heigh-ho!

COUNTER. Yes, yes, so his Lordship's letter expresses, and a very sensible one it is too. (*Takes it out. Emily retires up the stage, and returns.—C. and Mrs. C. read together : reads,*) “Lasting attachment—sincerity—marked affection—entertain hopes—honor of her hand—great respect for Mrs. Counter—Henry Drummond.”—Very polite indeed!

MRS. COUNTER. And quite the man of fashion.

COUNTER. Aye, and a man of rank too! second son of the Duke of Dunbar. Bless me, I see a baronetcy in every line, Sir John Counter, Bart.!!! But, my dear, I would not have it known for a mine of money that I am pleased at my daughter's marrying a nobleman—or—or that—I like people of rank; it never would do in the city. Honest John Counter remarkable for his independence would be laughed to scorn—Ah! well, it's all your doing.

Mrs. COUNTER. It is, and glorious will be the climax, when I take precedence as "My Lady Counter, Baronet!"

Enter JENNY.

JENNY. Miss Counter's geometrical master has called : her singing mistress has been waiting this hour for her.

EMILY (*Aside.*) Thank heaven I shall now escape.—I'll do as papa and mama desire.

[*Exeunt EMILY and JENNY.*]

COUNTER. That's a good girl—Dear, dear, what expense! Pray, Mrs. C., may I ask, as I pay that lady three guineas a lesson, has Emily any voice?

Mrs. COUNTER. At present that is not considered as a requisite in singing; for Madame Squintini teaches young ladies to look their song, to warble with their eyes those sentiments, which their poverty of voice prevents them from otherwise expressing.

COUNTER. In that case, instead of a music mistress, I should recommend Emily's studying under some eminent oculist. Ah! I tell you all

this high life don't suit me—it's the devil to be genteel, when one is not so in reality.

MRS. COUNTER. Nonsense, Mr. C. Are you not invited every where—to the house of the Duke of this one day—the Duchess of t'other the next—the Countess of so-and-so's to-morrow—and to my Lady what-dy'e-call-it's ten days hence?—and, yesterday, were you not seen walking arm in arm with the Earl of Mount-Eagle in St. James's Square?

COUNTER. Yes, and his Lordship proposed to borrow money of me before we got into Pall Mall, which was very flattering.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Sir Harry Lureall has called, Sir.

MRS. COUNTER. Show him in. What an amiable man is Sir Harry! so much the fashion!

COUNTER. Ha! I don't half like him—I hear strange stories about him.

MRS. COUNTER. Stuff, Mr. Counter! they must be false. Does he not get us tickets for all the balls and masquerades in town?

COUNTER. Aye, and is the first to laugh at us when we arrive there.

Enter LUREALL.

LUREALL (*to her.*) Your most obedient, Mrs. Counter. Sir, yours eternally.

MRS. COUNTER. Many thanks for this visit—
Pray what's the news? what's doing in town?

LUREALL. Every body is talking of Lady Splashton's grand masquerade for to-morrow. She particularly requests me to invite you, and Miss Emily, and Mr. Counter.

MRS. COUNTER. Oh, you are too good—delightful! eh, Mr. C.? (*goes up.*)

COUNTER. Very, Mrs. C. We are inquired after, as they say of a particular stock in the city.

MRS. COUNTER. Mr. C. Mr. C. if you love me, be genteel.

LUREALL. But my business here is of a very serious nature, a proposal for Emily. Here it is. (*Gives COUNTER the letter.*)

MRS. COUNTER. What, two proposals in a day? Bless me! (*Looks over COUNTER, who reads.*)

COUNTER. What, from George Foster?

LUREALL. Yes, a gentleman of acknowledged taste, of liberal habits, and strict fashion, upon my veracity!

COUNTER. Sir, if there is one person I dislike more than another, 'tis Mr. Foster, though I have not seen him for several years; nor, were I, should I know him again.

LUREALL. But he is *known* to every one of us at Brookes's.

MRS. COUNTER. He has not a guinea, Sir.

COUNTER. A man without a shilling, Sir.

MRS. COUNTER. He is a gambler, Sir.

COUNTER. He is a horse-racer, Sir.

LUREALL. Silence! You bore me by such vociferation. A low tone of voice is now the fashion. (*Aside.*) Vulgar people!!

COUNTER (*very low.*) I beg your pardon, Sir Harry, but can you imagine that I would give my daughter to such a spendthrift?

LUREALL (*Aside.*) I have made a confounded mistake—I must retrieve. Hear me, Mr. Counter. Though, Mr. Counter, I am the bearer of George Foster's letter, still do not suppose that I by any means intend to recommend him to you as a son-in-law: he is much too dissipated a character for me to praise him. I have used every argument to dissuade him from addressing Miss Emily, upon my veracity.

Mrs. COUNTER. I told you, Sir Harry was a sincere friend of ours.

COUNTER. Sir, I am under many obligations to you.

LUREALL. You are, Counter, upon my veracity, (*Aside*) and shall repay them.

Mrs. COUNTER. We shall be still further indebted to you, if you will convey to Mr. Foster our decided refusal.

COUNTER. Do, my good Sir, by all means.

LUREALL. Consider the affair as decided; for, believe me, my dear Counter, that I take a deeper interest in your affairs than you can possibly imagine. Adieu—Bon jour, Madame—(*takes an affected leave—she attempts the same absurdly*)—(*Aside.*) Ha! ha! perfect Brummagem good-breeding.

[*Exit.*

COUNTER. Bravo, my dear, we have settled that point manfully. What impudence! a man without a shilling to propose for my daughter, one of the richest girls in the city.

Mrs. COUNTER. At the West End you mean. Thank heaven, the coast is now clear for Lord Henry. Who waits? Come, my dear, let us prepare to pay our visit to Lady Mary Fretful. All the

fashionable world will be there this morning; and we are both in high spirits, after having shown such resolution with respect to Mr. Foster.

COUNTER. And paved the way for a coronet to decorate a Counter. [*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

LORD SPLASHTON'S *House.*

LORD SPLASHTON *discovered reading a newspaper.*
Coffee on the table.

LORD SPLASH. (*reads*) "Yesterday Lord Splash-ton left his residence in Grosvenor Square for Paris."—Did I? I should not have found it out if the newspaper had not told me so. (*Yawns.*) Well, I am glad my plans are settled for me by some one else, otherwise I never should have had energy enough to arrange them myself. It's the devil to be obliged to make up one's own mind.

Enter LADY SPLASHTON.

LADY SPLASH. Oh, so his Lordship is dressed at last. Why he does not stir. Lord Splashton! Lord Splashton! I think you might have the po-

liteness to take notice of me, when I am at the trouble of visiting you.

LORD SPLASH. (*Yawning.*) Oh! Oh! Upon my life I am particularly happy to see you: how are you, my love? (*Yawns, not looking*) I never saw you looking so well.

LADY SPLASH. As to my looks, they appear to have become a matter of perfect indifference to you. I really believe this is the first time I have seen you these three days. This coolness and carelessness of manner is insufferable. Thus it is that I am left to call my own carriage at assemblies and the Opera, or at least to become dependent on the civility of my acquaintance. I certainly did expect, when I married, that I should at least have received as much attention as other ladies meet with from their husbands; but I see an heiress is no longer an heiress, when once the ring is on her finger.

LORD SPLASH. Did you speak, my dear? Oh yes, I agree with you perfectly in every thing you have said. (*Reads on.*)

LADY SPLASH. This contemptuous treatment is more provoking than absolute ill-usage. Lord Splashton! Lord Splashton!

LORD SPLASH. You really interrupt me, my dear, in the middle of a most entertaining murder. The last appears to have been a very productive suicide week. The Herald says that the Green Park was as white with the remains of love-letters, as if there had been a snow-storm, and Rosamond's pond brimfull of deserted damsels. (*Rises.*)

LADY SPLASH. Go on, my Lord! you have become a perfect master of that St. James's Street style of wit, turning into ridicule the misfortunes or failings of women; and instead of making allowances, or finding excuses for their weakness, you but join in the vulgar—ha! ha! ha! against them. Very manly indeed!

LORD SPLASH. You wrong me, upon my life. Positively no man on earth makes so many allowances for the dear creatures, and decidedly I pass my mornings in framing excuses for and getting the angels out of scrapes.

LADY SPLASH. Which you probably got them into the night before.

LORD SPLASH. Nay, nay, love, you are too severe: I fear that you lost your money at Lady Roulette's last night. Now I often think what a happy woman you must or at least ought to be.

Have you not a vis-a-vis, a barouche, and a curri-
cle—a box at the play and the Opera—a cottage on
the Thames—as many caps and gowns as your
milliner can desire—an early party, a rout, and a
dozen balls every night—as many horses and foot-
men too, as you can kill in the season ;—and have
you not me for a husband ? What a prodigiously
happy woman you are !

LADY SPLASH. So perhaps the world may
think from all this outward show ; but running
from one ball to another is not happiness—'tis
seeking for an ideal pleasure which one never
finds.

LORD SPLASH. I vow I hardly ever go any
where except to the House of Lords on business,
or to the club just to play a rubber at whist.

LADY SPLASH. My Lord, while you are playing
at whist, or while you are debating on the national
interests, do let me recommend you not to allow
your carriage to wait at the door of a certain gay
widow in Berkeley Square.

LORD SPLASH. (*Aside.*) So she suspects Lady
Mary !—How can you be so ridiculous ? Ha ! ha !
I may look in there occasionally, just as I drive
past in the morning—merely that sort of thing.

LADY SPLASH. (*mimicking him.*) Just as I drive past—just step in to see how the dear creature looks, ten minutes only !

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Sir Harry Lureall to wait on your Ladyship. [*Exit Servant.*

Enter LUREALL.

LUREALL. (*to her.*) Lady Splashton, your most obedient. Your complexion tells me I have no occasion to ask after your health.

LORD SPLASH. Right, Lureall, my Lady has a brilliant colour to-day, and she is in very fine voice too, I can tell you—are you not, my dear ?

LADY SPLASH. Which is extremely fortunate, for I found his Lordship quite deaf this morning ; but lately he has recovered his hearing astonishingly—haven't you, my dear ?

LUREALL. Oh, ho ! quarrelling !—I am delighted at this. (*Aside.*)

LORD SPLASH. You will be amazingly entertained, Sir Harry ! the very best thing, ha ! ha ! ha !

Only imagine—my Lady is jealous of—ha! ha! ha!—Lady Mary Fretful.—(*To LUREALL.*) Ha! ha!—laugh at her—ha! ha! ha!

LUREALL. Oh, it is too ridiculous!—ha! ha! ha!

LORD SPLASH. Oh, it is the best joke!—ha! ha! ha!

(*LUREALL laughs with LADY SPLASHTON at LORD SPLASHTON, who forces a laugh, LUREALL affecting to laugh at her.*)

LUREALL. Now seriously, Lady Splashton, what can possibly have induced you to believe any thing so absurd?—(*Aside to her.*) Touch him about the bracelet. Indeed it's too ridiculous.—(*Aside to LORD SPLASHTON.*) We must treat it as a jest—it's your only chance. (*Both laugh.*)

LADY SPLASH. I am delighted it affords you so much amusement. I am equally charmed to hear that Lady Mary admired the bracelet so particularly. (*LUREALL and LADY SPLASHTON laugh.*)

LORD SPLASH. Oh! so they told you I gave her a bracelet, did they? I was not aware that I had been so liberal.—Egad, I must stop their laughter. (*Aside.*)—Now don't, my dear, go on thus

(*to her,*) for you are not conscious whose feelings you are wounding—is she, Sir Harry? Others as well as your Ladyship will be jealous—won't they, Sir Harry?—Ha! ha! ha!

LUREALL. Upon my word, I don't know who will; not I for one. I protest, Lady Splashton, I never in all my life—

LADY SPLASH. (*Angry.*) Oh, I dare say not.

LORD SPLASH. He cannot deny that I found him on his knees to her three days ago; but, pray, never mention it to a soul—ha! ha! ha! (LADY SPLASHTON *affects to laugh, but cannot.*)

LUREALL (*Aside.*) He'll play the devil with me.—(*To LADY SPLASHTON.*) This is merely an evasion. Very well, my Lord, lay it upon me—if you choose, I will take it all upon myself for your sake.

LADY SPLASH. Upon my word, gentlemen, you seem to have delightful occupation in Berkeley Square.—I perceive I have been deceived by both. (*Aside.*)—I beg, Sir Harry, the next time you find yourself on your knees to Lady Mary, that you will request her to send the picture which is in the bracelet to the person for whom it was originally designed!

[*Exit LADY SPLASHTON.*]

LORD SPLASH. Ha! ha! By Jupiter, I give myself the greatest credit for turning the attack upon you.

LUREALL. Yes, it was particularly well timed.

LORD SPLASH. Yes, and it had its effect. You observed that she immediately stopped tormenting *me* about Lady Mary.

LUREALL. *I particularly remarked that*, believe me.

LORD SPLASH. Certainly, for I knew you would not mind my wife's imagining that you had a flirtation with Lady Mary.

LUREALL. Oh no, I did not in the least mind it—on the contrary, was very much amused. —(*Aside.*) Never was man so damnably annoyed!

LORD SPLASH. I thought it would entertain you; but how could she possibly have heard of the bracelet?

LUREALL. I cannot imagine, unless Major O'Simper, or perhaps George Foster, who calls here frequently, and last night was in earnest conversation with her. However, I am the last man in the world to insinuate, but I say nothing; only malicious people *will talk*. I wonder that

you, who are so alive to that kind of thing, have not remarked—

LORD SPLASH. You are really a sincere friend. I—I have long suspected that Foster informs her of my actions. However, I will observe. Yes, yes, I have given her too much liberty—he is too attentive.

LUREALL. (*Aside.*) The sting has struck him.

LORD SPLASH. My dear friend, now don't laugh— but really I should be sincerely sorry that my wife's conduct was remarked upon by the world: for though we do quarrel, I have the greatest esteem for her; but for mercy's sake, do not let her know it.

LUREALL. Depend upon it, she shall not, at least through me; but instead of quarrelling at home, why not go out, and find amusement elsewhere? What's life given us for but to enjoy it? There's Lady Mary expecting to see you; I have just left her—she talks of nothing but you.

LORD SPLASH. She is a delightful soul! I'll take your advice; I'll go and visit her.—But, Lureall, I am in a sad state! On all sides I am

tormented for money. Do you think old Counter could be brought to advance a sum ?

LUREALL. I have already borrowed of him, and naturally want to borrow more. Perhaps by a joint security something may be effected.

LORD SPLASH. By all means try him ; money I must have, cost what it will.—Ha ! here comes my Lady, therefore adieu till we meet again. Now, do act the part of a real friend. Remain here, and endeavour to get her into good humour, while I drive to Lady Mary's : don't forget the rich Alderman. [*Exit.*]

LUREALL. Rely upon my doing all in my power to put her Ladyship in the best possible temper.—A little judicious flattery will do wonders with an angry woman.

Enter LADY SPLASHTON.

LADY SPLASH. So, my Lord is gone—to Lady Mary's of course. Really, gentlemen, you are very accommodating to each other. I suppose you will not appear there until he has paid his visit ?

LUREALL. You astonish me, indeed ! Is it possible that a person possessing your Ladyship's dis-

cernment and penetration can allow yourself to be deceived by so palpable a subterfuge? Do permit that superior judgment, which distinguishes you, to resume its functions, and the mist now before your eyes will be dispelled.

LADY SPLASH. Then you do not admire Lady Mary?

LUREALL. Can the lovely Lady Splashton for a moment imagine, that once having felt the supernatural influence of her charms, it is in the power of another, to make him for an instant forget her to whom his existence is devoted?

LADY SPLASH. I feel myself guilty for having so often listened to your protestations. 'Tis unfair to press me on such a subject, when my pride is wounded, when conflicting passions torture me. No, no—Lord Splashton may yet return to that wife whose heart still retains a true regard for him.

LUREALL. (*Aside.*) Egad they are in love with one another without knowing it—this will never do.—Yes, he will return when tired of her who now triumphantly wears the bracelet and picture originally intended for you. Can you thus tamely

submit to be insulted—to be treated with indignant levity by one so inferior to you as Lady Mary? No, it cannot, must not be. By this lovely hand I vow—(*During this speech he seizes her hand. She appears affected—he affects agitation, and kneels.*)

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Your Ladyship's carriage is at the door.

LUREALL. Deuce take him!—ha! ha!—this is the prettiest ring in the world. You shall let me see the motto—I will see it, for I am sure it is dreadfully sentimental—Oh, William, desire the carriage to wait, for her Ladyship will keep me fighting here this hour.

(*Exit Servant. LUREALL lets go her hand.*)

(*Aside.*)—an opportunity lost is nearly allied to a total failure.

LADY SPLASH. Heavens! have I betrayed my weakness before a servant? Into what an unfortunate situation have your irritating arguments deluded me! Let me assure you, Sir Harry, 'tis more my wounded pride that has tempted me to listen to your declarations than any feeling of a

more tender nature. Your eloquence is no doubt seductive; but 'tis Lord Splashton's inconstancy which may, and I tremble lest it should, drive me to destruction; for although I could brook his ill temper, I cannot his neglect. [*Exit in tears.*

LUREALL. Proud beauty, you are mine. Call your heart's sufferings, wounded pride, or what name you please, 'tis jealousy, that deadly fiend, which has got possession of your breast. So in despite of yourself, you are mine. My plan works bravely now; and if I can but induce Counter to lend me another sum, to-morrow's ball shall see my fate and that of others decided—I swear it.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

LADY MARY'S *House.*

Enter LADY MARY.

LADY MARY. It is most extraordinary that Lord Splashton has not yet called. What can have detained him! how long does his absence appear!

Unless Lureall can alienate Lady Splashton's affections, I see my power over him will be incomplete. I almost fear he may be ranked among those too clever rogues who always overshoot their marks.

Enter Servant, showing in LORD SPLASHTON.

LORD SPLASH. Desire my carriage to wait in Bruton Street.—Lady Mary, I am delighted to see you. Pardon me for being so late, but—

LADY MARY. No apologies—you have been, I suppose, delayed by your usual morning quarrel with her Ladyship.

LORD SPLASH. Precisely so. I escaped the instant I was able, leaving my friend Lureall to pacify her. I have no doubt that, when she has changed her costume of frowns and black looks for her full-dress company face, we shall see her in the world as good-humoured and unconcerned as if nothing had occurred at home. However, it is very consoling to think that there are several other respectable men in my situation.

LADY MARY. Are there no husbands who, though overbearing and ill-tempered at home, put on a masque when they appear in society, become

the charm of their circle, and are called the best-natured creatures in existence? eh, my Lord? You forget I was once married; but notwithstanding what you say, I believe the report of your being in love with—

LORD SPLASH. With whom?

LADY MARY. Your own wife—ha! ha!

LORD SPLASH. Pshaw, what malice there is in this world! I certainly both respect and esteem her prodigiously, and considering her beauty, no doubt should feel the strongest attachment for her, if—if she—

LADY MARY. Was any body's else's wife but your own.

LORD SPLASH. Do not torment me, Lady Mary. You know too well where my affections are, I fear, unfortunately placed. Taunt me not thus, but take pity on one whose mind is distracted; for by all that is sincere I swear—

LADY MARY. Nay, nay, you need not swear. I detest protestations—I judge by actions. He that would win my heart must prove himself worthy of it by decided sacrifices.

LORD SPLASH. Name them, and I will obey.

LADY MARY. Not so fast, my good Lord. The time may come when you will have to prove your words.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Major O'Simper to wait on your Ladyship.

LORD SPLASH. How provoking to be thus interrupted at such a moment!

LADY MARY. You had better show him in, for I expect more visitors immediately.

[Exit Servant.]

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER.

MAJOR. How do you do to-day, Lady Mary—and how is my good Lord? But I don't interrupt you? May be I am one too many, as Vulcan observed to Venus when he met her arm in arm with Mars.

LADY MARY. By no means; on the contrary, we are merely talking of the wind and weather.

MAJOR. (*Aside.*) Faith, notwithstanding, I believe they wish me ten feet under the Thames.

LADY MARY. Come, Major, let us hear the

news—what's doing in town? You who know every thing?

MAJOR. A vast deal in the talking line, which rather proves a deficiency of reality; however, in the billing and cooing line, one fact is certain—all is at an end between Miss Counter and George Foster.

LADY MARY. Are you quite sure of that? If it is so, he probably has formed an attachment somewhere else. (*Looking at LORD SPLASHTON.*)

MAJOR. Perhaps so, and may be the lady has also found a more accomplished admirer. I rather flatter myself that I am aware of the reason of this change of sentiment.

LORD SPLASH. (*Aside.*) 'Tis clear; conviction flashes on my mind. Foster has, I see—

LADY MARY. What, Major, would you have us imagine that you have fluttered Emily's heart?

MAJOR. Madam, you touch on a delicate subject. Ladies will change their minds—won't they, my Lord?

LORD SPLASH. Yes, and their husbands too sometimes.

MAJOR. Observe how he feels poor George's disappointment.

LORD SPLASH. Deuce take him, and his disappointment !

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Lady Splashton to wait on your Ladyship.

LORD SPLASH. Heaven ! how unfortunate ! I'll not remain !

LADY MARY. There's no avoiding it : why did you say I was at home ? *[Exit Servant.*

MAJOR. By my faith, I believe the wind and weather conversation will now take rather a stormy turn, judging from his Lordship's matrimonial barometer !

Enter LADY SPLASHTON.

LADY MARY. My dear Lady Splashton, this visit is very kind.—I am so much obliged to you for it ! 'twas so considerate of you to think of me !

LADY SPLASH. You are too good—you are so amiable. You know there is no one whose society I so much covet. *(Aside.)* I cannot bear the sight of the creature.

LADY MARY. (*Aside.*) How spiteful the little viper looks !

LADY SPLASH. (*to* LORD SPLASH.) I see you have taken my advice, and sent your carriage into the next street. I admire your caution.

LORD SPLASH. Does your Ladyship blame me for obeying your orders ?

LADY MARY. (*Aside.*) Now to light the flame of discord. I suppose you have heard the news, that Mr. Foster has given up all idea of Miss Counter ?

LORD SPLASH. Oh, it's decided. Perhaps you, my dear, can inform us of the reason ?

LADY SPLASH. Not I, upon my word. You surprise me—I have never heard of it.

LORD SPLASH. With what insufferable assurance and unconcern she carries it off! (*Aside.*)

LADY SPLASH. Why! surely Emily cannot have changed her mind ; and Mrs. Counter could scarcely have had the impudence to refuse my cousin.

LORD SPLASH. Your Ladyship seems to be extremely interested in your cousin's happiness.

LADY MARY. You take it very much to heart, my dear!

LADY SPLASH. I am at a loss to understand these insinuations.—(*Aside.*) She has the bracelet on her arm!

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Mr. and Mrs. Counter to wait on your Ladyship.

LADY MARY. Shall I be at home?

LADY SPLASH. By all means! (*Exit Servant.*) We shall hear all about George Foster. At all events we can amuse ourselves at her expense.

MAJOR. Poor woman, she is in a phrenzy because my Lady Tadcaster has not asked her to a ball she has no intention of giving.

OMNES. Ha! ha! ha!

LADY SPLASH. I hear she absolutely pays the newspapers five hundred a year to put her name down as being at all the fashionable parties!

OMNES. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter MR. and MRS. COUNTER. They all gather round them.

How do you do, my dear Mrs. Counter! We are all delighted to see you, Mr. Counter—quite charmed at your visit, &c. &c.

COUNTER *returns the compliments awkwardly.* MRS. COUNTER *curtsies low and absurdly.*

MAJOR. How delightful it is to find ourselves in the bosom of our most attached friends!

LADY MARY. Allow me, my dear Mr. Counter, to give you joy. I am delighted to hear that the marriage is all arranged between Emily and Mr. Foster.

LADY SPLASH. Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Counter, also.

COUNTER. Upon my word, Ladies, when last I took stock of my family, I found no such item as a son-in-law in the account; nor in the list of my fashionable assortment of friends, do I find that I am even acquainted with "that finished article Mr. Foster."

MRS. COUNTER. (*Aside.*) Drop your city cant, Mr. Counter, or I die!

MAJOR. Oh! it must be fact, for I heard it last

night at Vauxhall, to-day in St. James's, and every body has it in the Park.

MRS. COUNTER. How particularly aggravating ! It's no such thing—every thing is at an end on that subject, and I beg you'll contradict it. Yes, yes, my Lady Myrtle has spread this report, and she, you know, has been discovered under very *faux-pas* circumstances !—

OMNES. With what?—whom?—which?—how?—when?—who?

LADY SPLASH. I cannot believe that so excellent a person can have wandered, for she always railed at flirting as if 'twere a sin ; but if you say so, Mrs. Counter—humph ! I suppose you are not asked at her next fête.

SERVANT. Sir Harry Lureall. [*Exit Servant.*]

Enter LUREALL.

LADY MARY. Oh ! Sir Harry, Mrs. Counter has just related a sad story of poor dear Lady Myrtle. I hope it is not quite true.

LUREALL. Decidedly it is, if Mrs. Counter affirms it ; tho' I never heard it even whispered.

MRS. COUNTER. Oh ! Lord save me !—don't

quote me. I only heard it from the man in the street. I would not offend a person of Lady Myrtle's fashion for the world; indeed I never said a word about it.

OMNES. Beyond a doubt you are the authority. Oh, shameful! horrid!

COUNTER. I always told you, Mrs. C., that the surplus produce of your tongue would bring your veracity to a discount.

MRS. COUNTER. Mercy on me, I am in a monstrous scrape! Silence, Mr. C.; they will all abuse her themselves in ten minutes.

LUREALL. By-the-bye, did not the Morning Post allude to it pathetically yesterday?

MAJOR. *Sartainly*; and no doubt next Sunday's papers will give the world full particulars before church-time.

OMNES. To be sure—very likely; oh, very probable.

LUREALL. We shall now be relieved from her dinners, to which she invited us, by giving a quarter's notice, when we met sixteen people hermetically crammed into a room fourteen by ten.

LORD SPLASH. Most true; and where the servants hired by Gunter to *wait for the day*, were obliged to taste the cruets, to know oil from vinegar, and eat more than the company. I remember desiring one of them, superbly dressed in her livery, to take the claret to his mistress: he replied, "I beg your pardon, Sir, I do not know the lady by sight: which is she?"

OMNES. Ha! ha! ha!

LADY SPLASH. There is no end to the reports; they will furnish a fund of conversation at my masked ball to-morrow night. I hope you have all got your cards—Lady Mary—Sir Harry—Major?

(*They assent. MRS. COUNTER curtsies low.*)

MRS. COUNTER. I am much obliged by your Ladyship's invitation.

LADY SPLASH. My invitation! Excuse me—I was not aware that I should have the honour of your company.

MRS. COUNTER. Oh, dear, dear! I shall faint. I assure your Ladyship Sir Harry was good enough—

LUREALL. Allow me, Lady Splashton. Knowing

you intended to invite our friends the Counters, I took the liberty of asking them.

LADY SPLASH. Oh, in that case, Sir Harry, I shall be most happy to see them.

(MRS. COUNTER *thanks* SIR HARRY.)

COUNTER. Bless me! to-morrow a ball in his house! Why, there are two executions in it at this moment. (*Aside.*)

LADY MARY. 'Tis very good of you to give this fête—it will be charming. I suppose we are all going to Lady Tadcaster's on Saturday.

LADY SPLASH. MAJOR. LUREALL. (*assent.*) Oh yes, certainly; every body will be there.

MRS. COUNTER. (*in a fuss.*) Dear me, I have no card of invitation. I would not for the world miss it. Do, my dear Lady Splashton, (*to her,*) get me asked.

LADY SPLASH. Upon my word I hardly know her, otherwise I should be most happy.

MRS. COUNTER. My dear Lady Mary, (*to her,*) you will oblige me infinitely if you can assist me.

LADY MARY. I would with the greatest pleasure imaginable, but really I have asked her Ladyship for so many already.

MRS. COUNTER. My dear Sir Harry, can you?

LUREALL. We don't speak—she once sent me a letter sealed with a wafer—poisonous!

MRS. COUNTER. Major, can you? Pray do.

MAJOR. By my honor she is the only lady in town from whom I dare not ask a favour.

MRS. COUNTER. Lord bless me! I must drive all over London until I manage it. Mr. Counter, do call my carriage—do call my carriage, (*Aside*) though I do not like to be the first to move.

LADY SPLASH. We have all paid you rather a long visit, Lady Mary. Are you coming, my Lord? (*Aside.*) I shall not leave him here.

LORD SPLASH. Oh yes, my dear. What a bore! I want to remain particularly. (*Aside.*)

MAJOR. With Lady Mary's permission, I will also take my leave.

LUREALL. I fear we are interrupting her ladyship. Well, why don't we go?

MAJOR. We all talk of it, but somehow or other every one volunteers to be the first to be last.

(*General hesitation.*)

COUNTER. I trust the ladies and gentlemen are not afraid of the kind observations their worthy

friends would make upon them in their absence. (*All surprised.*)

MRS. COUNTER. Heavens! Mr. Counter, for shame! Bless me, what a notion to utter!

LUREALL. Allow me to arrange this important affair. (*Puts them in order.*) Suppose, for fear of accidents, that we all retire together.

OMNES. Agreed! agreed!

MAJOR. Not that we are however the least afraid of staying after each other.

OMNES. Oh no! oh no! quite the contrary!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

MRS. COUNTER'S *House*.

MRS. COUNTER, EMILY, *and* MR. COUNTER *discovered*.

MRS. COUNTER. Well, Mr. Counter, this is a day indeed of real rejoicing to our family. Lady Emily Drummond!—how very dignified the sound! Child, are you not overwhelmed with joy?

EMILY. I assure you, that having yours and my father's consent to marry Lord Henry, I am indeed delighted.

COUNTER. That's obedient; I like that. Sir Simon Foster, whom I expect to day, will be charmed to hear it. I hope sincerely, however, that it will never get abroad that I wished my daughter to marry a Lord. If it did, John Counter would fall to a sad discount in the city. Now I

dare to say that some of your west-end acquaintance will find me out, and torment me to death.

MRS. COUNTER. You are afraid that your old enemies will ridicule you behind your back.

COUNTER. No—I am much more afraid of my new friends quizzing me before my face, for being present is no safeguard to their genteel impertinence.

MRS. COUNTER. Now, Emily, hold up your head—look pretty—show your teeth. Mr. C., take your hands out of your pockets, and do turn out your toes like Sir Harry Lureall. My Lord will be here directly—now pray be very circumspect in your reception of him.

COUNTER. Oh yes, I have studied that particularly—I shall be quite double-refined, as we say of best sugar.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Lord Henry Drummond to wait upon you, Sir.

MRS. COUNTER. (*in a fuss.*) Oh, here he is! here is his Lordship!

COUNTER. (*hastily.*) So his Lordship is come.
—I'm quite in a fidget. Well, my dear!

EMILY. Had we not better retire at first?
(*Aside.*) I am so dreadfully alarmed, that I can hardly support myself.

MRS. COUNTER. No! no! We must receive his Lordship according to fashionable etiquette; if we did not, he might imagine that we were ignorant of the forms of the great world. Yes, show his Lordship in. [*Exit Servant.*]

COUNTER. I shall not appear as if I considered his Lordship's custom—I mean proposals—as any compliment. No! no! old John Counter's character for independence must be supported.

Enter FOSTER as Lord Henry Drummond, dressed handsomely. MR. and MRS. COUNTER range themselves. FOSTER bows low. MRS. COUNTER curtsies formally, and COUNTER bows awkwardly, with an air of vulgar dignity.

FOSTER. Permit me, Mrs. Counter, to express to you the innate gratification I feel at beholding for the first time the accomplished mother of the beauteous Emily! a lady so remarkable for her

celebrity in the best society. Accept, Madam, the assurance of my devotion.

MRS. COUNTER. Your Lordship's condescension is extremely flattering. It is with sentiments of the sincerest joy that we receive your Lordship's obliging proposals. (*To EMILY.*) He has heard of my being the fashion.

FOSTER. Believe me, Mrs. Counter, that the hand of your fair daughter has long been the object nearest to my heart, the attainment of which will crown with bliss my future days. Her attractions are truly brilliant; but this is not surprising, when we behold the distinguished example she has had to imitate. (*Turning to MRS. COUNTER.*)

COUNTER. (*formally.*) Your Lordship merely indorses the bill drawn in favor of my daughter's merits, and accepted by an hundred admirers.

MRS. COUNTER. (*aside to him.*) My dear, you are in Threadneedle Street again.

FOSTER. (*to EMILY.*) Dear, sweet Emily, keep up your spirits—all's well as yet.

EMILY. I am ready to expire for fear of a discovery.

FOSTER. True, Sir; but allow me to assure you that in soliciting this desirable union, my leading motive has been the desire of connecting myself with a family, the head of which is so highly esteemed and respected.

COUNTER. Most certainly, my Lord. I am proud to say that the house of Counter and Co., I—I—that is—my family have always maintained the highest reputation.

FOSTER. And although this is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting you, I cannot help feeling, both from the refinement of your manners, and the affability of your address, that the world has not been sufficiently generous of its praises to you. (COUNTER bows.) And I am happy to inform you that my brother, the Duke of Dunbar, has desired me to express his satisfaction at my forming so desirable an alliance.

COUNTER. (*seizes his hand, quite overpowered.*) My dear Lord—Your Lordship—You are too good. His Grace flatters me prodigiously. I beg your Lordship will only express your wishes.—His Grace the Duke of Dunbar!!

FOSTER. I shall certainly inform his Grace of your high sense of his kindness. (To EMILY.) As

to my dearest Emily, the only return I can make her for her endearing conduct, is to pass my life in endeavouring to add to her comfort and happiness. (*Kisses her hand.*) (*Aside.*) How well our plans succeed! Courage!

EMILY. Your Lordship's kind intentions will stimulate me to render myself worthy of your flattering attachment. (*They both talk together, and go up.*)

COUNTER. Oh! he is the most perfect gentleman I ever saw!—a prime sample of nobility!

MRS. COUNTER. Quite the man of fashion too.

COUNTER. His high respect for me too! and the Duke of Dunbar too!

MRS. COUNTER. One sees the nobleman in every movement.

FOSTER. There is, Mrs. Counter, one request I have to make, on account of certain jealousies in particular quarters—you understand me. I am very desirous that this marriage should be kept quite secret until it is finally arranged.

MRS. COUNTER. Your Lordship is quite right, very considerate. (*To COUNTER.*) It will then come like a thunderbolt on our envious friends.

COUNTER. Like a fall of five in consols, and will prevent George Foster from interfering. Your Lordship's commands shall be attended to; all orders executed with punctuality and despatch—hem!—and I trust sincerely that from the large fortune I intend to give Emily, she will enter into your Lordship's family with some pretensions.

FOSTER. Clearly! A lady entering into another family with a large fortune most certainly creates respect. Not that I at all consider money an object. (*Aside to EMILY.*) This is fortunate, my love, for I have not a guinea.

COUNTER. We are convinced of your Lordship's disinterestedness.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Major O'Simper, Sir.

MRS. COUNTER. Why did you say we were at home?

SERVANT. He did not ask, Madam, but said he would walk up stairs.

COUNTER. What impudence! What's to be done? (*All in a fuss.*)

EMILY. (*to MRS. COUNTER*) We had better re-

tire, otherwise our being seen here might lead him to a suspicion of our arrangements.

MRS. COUNTER. Very true, my love. Au revoir, my Lord—au revoir.

[*Exit* MRS. COUNTER, EMILY, and *Servant*.

FOSTER. Surely never was a man in such a state! How the devil am I to get over this! (*Aside*.)

FOSTER *retires and sits down, pretending to read, turning himself away from the MAJOR.*

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER.

MAJOR. Your most obedient, very humble servant. Mr. Counter, I have just called to pay my respects to the ladies—(*Aside*.) and to know if Jenny has delivered my note.

COUNTER. Unfortunately the ladies are—are rather unwell. Mrs. Counter has a head-ache, and Emily a cold.—I shall never get rid of him unless I ask him to dinner, which I certainly will not. (*Aside*.)

MAJOR. A cold! Oh, merely that species of fashionable indisposition which will not prevent their going to three or four parties this evening. I myself, I, have five engagements for to-day.

What it is to be asked everywhere, to know every body, or to be, as you would say in the city, "in great demand!"

COUNTER. I rather thought that the market for diners-out by profession was glutted—ha! ha! ha!

MAJOR. Vulgar personality! City wit, I suppose!! It was, in consequence of the arrival westward of a large cargo of gilt halfpence from the east, who, finding they had more money than friends, were obliged to hire their company at so much a plate!

COUNTER. Hang the fellow! (*Aside.*) Egad, I'll try his boasted knowledge of every body. Do you, Major, happen to be acquainted with Lord Henry Drummond?

MAJOR. Lord Henry Drummond! To be sure I am; certainly, particularly well.

FOSTER. (*Aside.*) Particularly well! I certainly shall be discovered and ruined!!

COUNTER. I beg your pardon then, Major, for not having before mentioned it. There sits his Lordship.

MAJOR. The devil he does! (*Aside.*)

COUNTER. I will inform him that you are here.

MAJOR. (*confounded and endeavouring to stop him.*) No! no! by no means! He is reading. (*Aside.*) By

all the powers I don't know him from Adam or Eve. How unlucky ! Oh, Goddess of Impudence, who never desertest an Irishman when he is bothered, assist me now !

COUNTER. (*touches FOSTER who affects to read.*)
Lord Henry ! Lord Henry ! your friend Major O'Simper is here !

FOSTER. Ah bless me ! is he indeed ? So he is.
(*Covers his face with his handkerchief in advancing.*
The MAJOR also covers his face as much as possible from FOSTER.)

MAJOR. Ah ! my good Lord, is that you ? I am extremely gratified at meeting you again. Is your Lordship as gay as ever ? We have not met, upon my honor, since we—last parted—at—at—

FOSTER. Spa, I believe, Major—(*Aside*) where I never was.

MAJOR. Spa was the place, by my faith ! The party was highly diverting—(*Aside*) the devil a party I ever saw there ! You may remember the German Baron Hoggenstein, who eat so much ; and the Russian Count Swilloffsky, who drank so much ; and the French Marquis you quizzed so much—Oh, it was strikingly entertaining !

FOSTER. Oh, yes ! oh, ah ! very true ! I remember

it well—ha! ha! (*Aside.*) Who the deuce does he mistake me for?

MAJOR. (*Aside.*) By my honour, his Lordship's memory is elegantly adapted to my inventive faculties! He would make a choice travelling companion.

COUNTER. He has quite brought old times to your Lordship's recollection.

MAJOR. You remember, no doubt, the little blue-eyed Polish girl you admired so much, with whom you were so much in love?

FOSTER. No! no! I don't indeed.—No! no! no!

MAJOR. Oh by my honour you do—you must—

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Sir Simon Foster's carriage is just drawing up, Sir.

COUNTER. Say I am at home—quick, quick.

[*Exit Servant.*

FOSTER. Heavens, my father! Now I am undone! What on earth to do? (*Aside.—Goes up.*)

MAJOR. I'll take *this* opportunity of inquiring

after the health of the fair invalides.—Your Lordship cannot forget the little Polish girl.

[*Exit* MAJOR.]

FOSTER. Damn his Polish girl. I must—I beg your pardon, Mr. Counter—take my leave ; particular business obliges me : my lawyers expect me.

COUNTER. Indeed, my Lord, I cannot spare you now. Let me introduce you to Sir Simon, though perhaps you know him ?

FOSTER. Know him—no, I think not. Foster—Foster—Sir Simon Solomon—no, no, I do not—but another time I shall be most happy to make his acquaintance. I shall return immediately, but pray excuse me : my lawyers expect me.

FOSTER *exits* as SIR SIMON *enters*, *keeping his back to* SIR SIMON, *and bowing to* COUNTER, *who returns it very low.*

COUNTER. Your most obedient, my Lord ! a thousand welcomes, dear Sir Simon.

SIR SIMON. I am delighted to see my old friend again. You see I have call'd on you before I have been to my niece Lady Splashton's : but I fear I interrupt you ; you were on business with

that gentleman. Who was he? though I think I ought to know his figure.

COUNTER. Oh no, you do not—he has been abroad for some time—in the foreign market, as we say. His name is a secret for the present; but you probably would not know him if I were to mention it.

SIR SIMON. What! have a secret from your old friend Simon Foster? Oh, I guess—Oh cunning dog—something snug on the tapis for Emily—aye, aye. You were always the cleverest fellow amongst us.

COUNTER. Well, say no more at present, for I promise you that you shall be the first to hear of whatever circumstance happens to our family of an interesting nature.

SIR SIMON. So be it. Now tell me something of my own relatives; I can apply no where so well—for I hear you live with all the Lords and Dukes in the land.

COUNTER. No, no, not I; but it's my wife; she lives with them all, as my banker's book can testify.

SIR SIMON. Aye, aye, any thing for a quiet life,

I suppose. But tell me—I have heard strange things about Lord Splashton's affairs: such extravagance!—such gambling!—and my niece, they say, encourages him! Dear, dear, and my son too! Just as bad; but, however, I have great hopes these things have been exaggerated; for my excellent friend, Sir Harry Lureall, writes me word that I must discredit half what I hear at least, and then not strictly believe the remainder: so much for London facts!

COUNTER. Your excellent friend Sir Harry Lureall tells you so, does he? Your friend, is he?

SIR SIMON. Why I cannot say he is my friend, except by letter, for I never saw him; but he appears to interest himself prodigiously in whatever concerns Lord and Lady Splashton.

COUNTER. (*Aside.*) This convinces me of his baseness. Why, he is the principal partner in the Dandy firm! He has not a farthing himself—but from his talents and agreeability has become quite the leader of the fashion, and is imitated and followed by all the young rakes of the day.

SIR SIMON. You astonish me; his letters to me breathe the most honorable feelings, and you

know I pride myself upon never being deceived in any one's character.

COUNTER. Know, moreover, that Lord Splash-ton and your son are two of his disciples ; and I understand such to be their intimate knowledge of each other's distresses, that when one leaves the room, the other two sit and wonder " how the devil he goes on."

SIR SIMON. Mercy on me ! I cannot believe that I have been his dupe too- I, who never was wrong in all my life, and every body says so in the country.

COUNTER. I dare say he has never mentioned to you that your son George has been paying his addresses to my daughter, proposing to marry her.

SIR SIMON. What!—and resign the heiress I have for him ? I cannot believe it.

COUNTER. And above all, Sir Simon, he has never once come near my house—I have never seen him since his return from the continent.

SIR SIMON. What insolence !—to make love to a gentleman's daughter, and never call upon him ! Is this the fashion now-a-days ?

Enter Servant.—Gives COUNTER a card.

COUNTER. (*much pleased.*) “The Earl of Mount-Eagle requests the honour of Mr. and Mrs. Counter’s company to dinner on Wednesday the 12th of June.” Bless me, how polite!—three weeks hence too!—how genteel! Excuse me, Sir Simon, for an instant—his Lordship is a particular friend of mine—a man of great importance.—Very condescending—calls me John!

SIR SIMON. Why, you seem wonderfully elated at his Lordship’s notice of you! Why, I thought it was all your wife’s vanity that led you into high life.

COUNTER. (*puzzled.*) Oh yes, so it is; but still it is very civil. Just excuse me until I answer his Lordship’s card.

SIR SIMON. Well, in the mean time I will visit your wife and Emily. I trust I shall find them as natural as formerly; and untainted by the genteel absurdities of the day.

COUNTER. The sound raw material you remember, has merely received the polish of fashionable elegance.

Exeunt severally, COUNTER reading his card with

delight; SIR SIMON exclaiming, "Oh! John Counter! John Counter! Here is a revolution indeed!!!"

SCENE II.

MRS. COUNTER'S *Room.*

MRS. COUNTER *discovered writing.*

MRS. COUNTER. I shall positively die of a disappointment fever, if I am not asked to Lady Tadcaster's. Lord Henry would be astonished! Sir Harry however, I'm sure, will arrange it: I must give him and his friends one or two dinners. I will write to him at once.

Enter JENNY with a letter—does not perceive MRS.

COUNTER.

JENNY. I hear the Major has call'd here—I must deliver the note, or I may be discovered by him. Now if Miss Emily will but answer it as I wish! La! how I should like to marry a major! how vulgar to be call'd a captain's wife! The major!

MRS. COUNTER. (*perceiving her.*) Ah, Jenny! what do you want? Bless me, what have you got there which you are so anxious to put into your pocket?

JENNY. (*confused.*) Got here, Ma'am? nothing, upon my word, Ma'am—only my French cambric pocket-handkerchief, Ma'am.

MRS. COUNTER. Why, it's a letter! Where did you get it?—who is it for? Speak. (*takes it out of JENNY'S hand.*) It's not directed—a heart and dagger on the seal—the motto, “Love me or strike.” How dare you receive letters with such inflammable devices? Who is it for?

JENNY. (*Aside.*) It's not being directed may save me. Why, Ma'am, Major O'Simper's gentleman gave it to me, Ma'am, for you: I did not know there was any harm in it.

MRS. COUNTER. Then why did you not give it to me at once, simpleton? (*Opens it, and reads to herself.*)

JENNY. (*Aside.*) If Miss Emily's name is not mentioned, all may still be well.

MRS. COUNTER. Why, it's an immeasurable declaration of love! Bless me!—Child, you need

not wait—always deliver a letter the moment you receive it.

JENNY. Yes, Ma'am. (*Aside.*) I will inform Miss Emily directly. Now this accident has happened through it's not being genteel for ladies-maids to wear pockets! Oh dear! [*Exit JENNY.*]

MRS. COUNTER. Mercy on me, this affair does astonish me. 'A love-letter!—to me too! I never dreamt of such paw-paw doings. I will take it to Mr. C.—but hold, it's fashionable to have an admirer—yes, very fashionable, and be in the fashion I must and will: but that's all. Really the Major's sentiments are quite paralysing. What a flow of language! (*reads.*) "Lovely Minny!"—lovely Minny! what's that? Oh! the short for my name, Araminta. "Enlisted under the expansive banners of beauty"—Really the Major is a vastly pleasing man. So much the fashion too—and so much at home in every society. Lady Mary Fretful, if she discovers his attentions to me, will expire with jealousy.

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER.

MAJOR. Oh, Madam, I have been this hour

detaining myself with Mr. Counter, in endeavouring to escape from him, that I might throw myself at the feet of two such emblematic angels as yourself and Miss Counter.

MRS. COUNTER. One at a time, Major. You are abundantly gallant.

MAJOR. True, Madam; from an early period I enlisted under the expansive banners of beauty—and ever since have become the professional slave of one whose charms have taken my soul by storm.

MRS. COUNTER. So your little interesting letter expresses.

MAJOR. (*surprised.*) My interesting letter, Ma'am? (*Aside.*) What the devil does she *mane*?

MRS. COUNTER. Yes, yours—which I have just received. It was delivered as you desired.

MAJOR. The devil it was! Jenny has betrayed me. (*Aside.*) That letter, Ma'am—Oh I beg your pardon—that letter was—yes, Ma'am, was—quite—

MRS. COUNTER. There is no occasion to beg pardon. The letter expresses feelings most creditable to their possessor.

MAJOR. Oh I am very glad you like them, Ma'am! they are very much at your service. (*Aside.*) By all the powers she has no objection to my marrying Emily, so I'll declare myself at once. —Yes, Madam, (*seizes her hand suddenly, &c. &c. She starts.*) permit—don't be alarmed, Ma'am—permit me to declare myself the distracted admirer of a lovely being whose superior virtues and amiable qualities render her the ornament of her sex—like the far-famed Diana of old.

Enter SIR SIMON—starts.

MRS. COUNTER. (*screams.*) Mercy on me! I shall faint!—You—you—surprise me, Sir Simon.

SIR SIMON. I perceive I do, Ma'am.

MAJOR. (*to MRS. COUNTER.*) Give me leave, Madam, to throw this respectable gentleman out of the window.

MRS. COUNTER. Heavens! 'tis Sir Simon Foster.

MAJOR. By St. Paul, you choose a mighty inconvenient time for visiting ladies, Sir.

SIR SIMON. And you for making declarations to them apparently, Sir.

MRS. COUNTER. But my dear Sir Simon, I must explain this, otherwise you may think it extraordinary finding the Major—hem! hem! Oh dear!

SIR SIMON. Oh no, Ma'am! I believe it's very common in London.

MRS. COUNTER. The fact is, the Major was, just as you came—the Major—ha! ha! (*affects to laugh; the MAJOR laughs also, and SIR SIMON joins in ridicule.*)

MAJOR. Ha! ha! ha! Yes, Sir, I was just going to explain my regard for Miss Emily—(MRS. COUNTER *stops short her laugh*) when you made your appearance.

MRS. COUNTER. (*hesitatingly.*) Yes, Sir, it was so indeed! (*Aside.*) Admirably turned, Major.

MAJOR. By my honour and conscience, Sir, it's the real truth *for once*.

SIR SIMON. Oh, I beg a thousand pardons: I interrupt you. My friend, Mr. Counter, will be overjoyed at hearing such agreeable news—he will be delighted, no doubt, at the Major's proposals. I will return to him.

MAJOR. Oh, by no means! It will never do to inform him yet awhile—there's no hurry.

MRS. COUNTER. No, Sir Simon, it would not be quite prudent to mention it just now. I will accompany you, Sir : (*to him.*) I am charmed to see you looking so well.

SIR SIMON. You are exceedingly polite. I beg I may not interfere with the Major : consider the Major's feelings.

MRS. COUNTER. Another time will suit him. Let me accompany you, Sir. The next opportunity, Major—(*aside to MAJOR*)—another time !—(*Exeunt SIR SIMON and MRS. COUNTER.*)

MAJOR. By all that's ugly, I believe she thinks that it was to her own rusty self I was proposing ! Upon my credit I have had a most miraculous escape ! It must be that little imp of mischief Jenny, who has betrayed me. However, I will continue the deception ; and under pretence of its being the mother, carry on the war against the daughter. Here comes the little brilliant of perfection.

Enter EMILY.

EMILY. Oh, Major, I heard you were here making the agreeable to my mother.

MAJOR. For the sake of her fascinating daughter.

EMILY. So you say. It's reported that you intend to bring old ladies into fashion: is it true really that you admire my mother?

MAJOR. By my faith, I believe your mother thinks so, for the letter I gave Jenny for you has fallen into her hands.

EMILY. You must not blame Jenny for that. She intercepted it.

MAJOR. And has appropriated to herself all the tender allusions addressed to you, my little enchanting fairy! By my honour, if old women are allowed to carry on this species of sentimental poaching, it will destroy the preserves of the licensed and qualified lover.

EMILY. But, Major, cannot you write another letter? I love a letter.

MAJOR. Why need I write, when to yourself—believe me, dearest Miss Emily, that the predominant attractions of your soothing features have struck my wounded heart! (*Attempts to kneel and take her hand.*)

EMILY. Have mercy on me, Major! This is too much really! (*Aside.*) Now to punish his insolence. (*She keeps retiring: sits down; he follows.*)

MAJOR. (*kneeling*) Treat not with levity the

mental anguish of your fervent admirer. Look with benignity upon the man whom your magnanimous beauties have captivated, and, like Cleopatra, smile on your faithful Antony.

EMILY. Do you then love me? You are a most determined lover. Indeed, Major, you frighten me out of my wits—you fascinate me like a rattlesnake. (JENNY looks in behind the MAJOR.) I cannot bear to reply while you are looking at me here—(*throws a cloak over his head.*) You must not remove this till I answer you; if you do, I will never speak to you again. (*Beckons to JENNY, who takes her place.*)

[*Exit EMILY.*

MAJOR. Reply, thou angelic syren, and keep not the mind of your adorer in such a state of disorderly suspense. (*Takes JENNY's hand.*) By this soft hand, whose genial fragrance electrifies my soul, I swear eternal fidelity! Nay, nay, love—you must not—shall not elope from me. Not all the saints in the calendar shall force me to rise until you consent.

JENNY. Oh mercy! here is all the family.

MAJOR. That trick shall not blind me, you little rogue.

Enter MR. and MRS. COUNTER, and SIR SIMON FOSTER. JENNY screams, and endeavours to escape. The MAJOR holds her.

MRS. COUNTER. The Major on his knees to Jenny !

COUNTER. Why how now, Sir ?

The MAJOR throws off the cloak—JENNY runs off screaming.

MAJOR. What, Jenny!—the whole family too !

MRS. COUNTER. You, Major, on your knees to Jenny ? Scandalous !—I am distracted with astonishment.

MAJOR. By my honour, Ma'am, you are not more confounded than I am myself.

COUNTER. Your honour, Sir ! Do you call it honourable to make love to a young woman in my house ? We all heard you, Sir.

MAJOR. By my conscience, Mr. Counter, though I was discovered in rather an inconsistent position, give me leave to assure you that I had no more *intention* of seducing Miss Jenny than I had of corrupting that respectable lady there, when Sir Simon—

MRS. COUNTER. Respectable lady indeed !—

What does he mean by calling a lady of my fashion respectable?

COUNTER. And to my wife too, Sir!—Explain, Sir, this fifty per cent outrage.

MAJOR. Take things aisy, Mr. Counter, and you shall have a per-contra demonstration. Some trick or joke has been played on me by Miss Emily; for having been interrupted by Sir Simon while about to open my views to her mother respecting her lovely daughter, I took the first opportunity of expressing them to Miss Emily herself; so falling upon my knees to her, I—

COUNTER. On your knees to my daughter too, Sir! Why he has been kneeling to every woman in the house!

SIR SIMON. According to the old Tipperary maxim I suppose,—“never be alone with a lady without having a kiss or a fight.”

MRS. COUNTER. Why he is the most unprincipled Irish Turk that ever passed for a Christian Major! I shall hasten to Emily, that I may learn the particulars. [Exit MRS. COUNTER.]

MAJOR. (To COUNTER.) Give me leave to as-

sure you, Sir, that you need not make yourself the *least uneasy*.

COUNTER. Leave my house, Sir—I insist upon it, Sir!

MAJOR. With the greatest pleasure imaginable ; but when I find you in a more reasonable humour for cool conversation, I shall convince you of your mistake ; and as to having insulted your family, I assure you I shall take as much pleasure in giving satisfaction to the gentlemen, as I should in receiving it from the ladies. Your most obedient, Sir Simon. [Exit MAJOR.]

COUNTER. There is an impudent cut-throat for you! Falls on his knees to every woman in the house, and then offers to massacre me, by way of giving me satisfaction! My dear Sir Simon, one is damned heavily taxed for living in what is called “good society.”

SIR SIMON. Ha! ha! ha! I can hardly help laughing at *you*—though I wish you had seen the Major proposing to Mrs. Counter instead of *me*. You would have been confoundedly astonished.

COUNTER. I should indeed ; but the less that is said the better. If this were to get to the clubs, I

should be ridiculed to death—Oh Lord ! Oh Lord !

SIR SIMON. Let this be a warning to you—that though your wife and daughter may live with duchesses and countesses, don't let them be too intimate with Hibernian majors! *[Exeunt.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A room in COUNTER's house. A glass-door at back.

Enter SIR SIMON and Servant.

SERVANT. Walk in, Sir. I expect Mr. Counter to return home immediately.

SIR SIMON. Very good—I will wait. (*Exit Servant.*) Notwithstanding my friend Counter's bad opinion of Sir Harry Lureall, I cannot believe that he has succeeded in imposing on me—I who never was deceived in any man's character; but his being the bearer of my son's proposals for Emily Counter looks very suspicious. Who have we here?

Enter Servant, showing in SIR HARRY LUREALL.

LUREALL. Well, well, the moment your master

comes in, tell him I am here: he appointed me at this hour. (*Exit Servant.*) How sure a creature of his description is to be “not at home” when a gentleman calls to borrow of him! However, as he displays a want of punctuality before the loan is advanced, I shall certainly imitate his alluring example after it’s received. (*Looks at Sir Simon through his glass.*) It’s a country gentleman I’ll wager; there’s a turnip and a top-boot in every feature. I’ll examine the biped. (*Aside.*)

SIR SIMON. By this gentleman’s excessive assurance, he must be some man of considerable fashion, I suppose. (*Aside.*)

LUREALL. Charming weather, Sir, this, we have in London! Nothing like it out of town—upon my veracity.

SIR SIMON. Truly so, Sir; but I assure you, however wonderful you may consider it, we have quite as fine in the country, in Somersetshire.

Enter COUNTER through glass door. COUNTER stops at perceiving them.

COUNTER. So, so, they have met.—Faith I'll let them discover each other. (*Retires, listens through the door.*)

LUREALL. Oh, oh! from Somersetshire, is he? Egad, I may get some information here. Allow me to ask, Sir, if you happen to know *a* Sir Simon Foster, who grows in the province you have just named?

SIR SIMON. Know him, Sir! (*Aside.*) This is most singular—I'll humour it.—Why, yes, Sir, I certainly am acquainted with *the* Sir Simon Foster who possesses a large estate in Somersetshire, if that's what you mean.

LUREALL. Just so—just so. I am an intimate friend of his. He has a vast esteem for me also—upon my veracity!

SIR SIMON. Dear, dear, I wonder who my intimate friend can be! Sir Simon, no doubt, Sir—

LUREALL. Is a most worthy being—a real specimen of your English country gentleman. He attends the quarter sessions—kills his own mutton

—wears creaking shoes—and takes his glass of sound port regularly after his cheese—upon my veracity.

SIR SIMON. Let me tell you, Sir, that a gentleman living on his estates is quite as useful a member of society as a London beau, who perhaps exists by plundering those friends of his who happen to be richer in money than intellect.

LUREALL. Ha! ha! by your severity I am sure, my worthy, that you have played the part of pigeon to some rook of *fashion*, ha! ha!

SIR SIMON. Upon my word, Sir, I do believe my pocket was picked once, and that by a gentleman of prodigious “*fashion*” as you call it.

COUNTER. (*Aside.*) Egad, they will balance accounts famously.

LUREALL. Well, Sir, whatever may be Sir Simon’s pursuits, his son George, I can tell you—

SIR SIMON. Aye, aye,—about him, Sir—do tell me—we hear he is dreadfully extravagant.

LUREALL. To be sure he is: ’twould take a gold mine to pay his regular expenses, and a silver one to find him in small change. He promises well, upon my veracity!

SIR SIMON. Dear, dear, here is an account of my hopeful son! (*Aside.*)—Ah well, sir, however, his marriage with Miss Cruikshanks the heiress will retrieve his affairs.

LUREALL. No it won't, for I have broken off that match. It's impossible for a young fellow of his calibre in society to marry a woman whose legs are as ingeniously twisted as the shafts of my cabriolet.

COUNTER. Oh, the rascal! Then 'twas he who advised Foster to propose for my daughter. (*Aside.*)

SIR SIMON. (*Aside.*) My rage will no longer brook this. Sir, you have interfered most unjustifiably between father and son. Miss Cruikshanks is a most amiable young lady, and full of good qualities.

LUREALL. Egad, this is old Cruikshanks himself. (*Aside.*)—Look ye, Mr. Cruikshanks—

SIR SIMON. Don't Cruikshanks me, Sir.

LUREALL. You mistake me entirely, Sir. I, individually, have no objection whatever to crooked legs—rather admire them; but just at this moment straight ones happen to be more in fashion—upon my veracity.

SIR SIMON. So, Sir, George Foster is to be ruined because his wife's ancles cannot receive their diploma for beauty from the coxcombs in White's bow-window!—Oh, it's infamous!

LUREALL. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter COUNTER.

COUNTER. I beg your pardon, Sir Harry Lure all, for having detained you.

SIR SIMON. (*Aside.*) Lureall! Mercy on me!

COUNTER. (*to SIR SIMON.*) Silence.—Now you are convinced, retire, and we may discover more.

(*SIR SIMON sits down at the back.*)

COUNTER. Excuse me, Sir Harry, but pressing business—

LUREALL. Delayed you of course.—Upon my soul I have been vastly diverted with that country acquaintance of yours: where the devil did you plough him up?

COUNTER. Speak of him respectfully, for he has always a large account at his bankers!—a warm man.

LUREALL. But come, let's to business. Now then, my dear Counter, I hope you are aware of

the very great personal friendship I have for you and your family.

COUNTER. Really, I was not quite sensible—

LUREALL. Precisely so—I perceive you feel it.

COUNTER. But let me assure you that—

LUREALL. There is no occasion—I am satisfied. Besides, I know you entertain for me the most sincere regard.

COUNTER. As much as one common acquaintance does for—

LUREALL. Say no more, my dear fellow! You distress me—you overpower me with kindness, upon my honour.

COUNTER. But seriously, Sir Harry—

LUREALL. Oh you are too obliging—stop.—It is that regard alone which induces me to trouble you at this moment, for I just happen to want three thousand pounds. You can have it again, my dear fellow, whenever you wish, of course.

COUNTER. Aye, aye—but remember you already owe me—

LUREALL. Two thousand you are going to say, which this loan will enable me to repay. Don't you see?

COUNTER. Not exactly I confess ; but what security do you propose ?

LUREALL. My friend Splashton of course. He will be enormously rich when his relative Sir Simon is obliging enough to retire to a better world, a great part of whose estate he inherits in right of his wife.

COUNTER. So I understand ; but perhaps he—

LUREALL. Advance him five thousand also, and he shall give you a mortgage in reversion on it, which settles the matter at once.

COUNTER. I am by no means certain, however, of the real value of that property.

LUREALL. But I am : I know full as much about Sir Simon's affairs as if they were my own.

COUNTER. (*Aside.*) A thought strikes me : I'll expose this schemer completely. By the bye it is very fortunate that this Somersetshire gentleman can give us all the information we require. I'll speak to him.

LUREALL. What, to old Cruikshanks ? Do by all means.—(*Aside.*) This looks well indeed. Bravo!—I shall obtain the money, which will enable me to succeed in my grand point with Lady Splashton ;

then his Lordship and Counter may settle the repayment as they please afterwards—ha! ha!

(COUNTER goes to SIR SIMON, persuades him to come forward—he hesitates—advances with COUNTER.)

LUREALL. Mr. Counter tells me that you, Sir, can inform us of all particulars respecting Sir Simon Foster's property. This is lucky, for we have some little arrangements to make about the future disposal of it.

SIR SIMON. (*Aside.*) Mercy on me! is he going to sell my estate before my face?

LUREALL. After my friend Sir Simon's death, how much devolves to Lady Splashton—eh?

SIR SIMON. Af—after—my—his—d—d—death? (*stammering.*) About five thousand a-year, Sir.

COUNTER. And with that I fear his Lordship would be bankrupt.

LUREALL. Pooh, pooh! He owes money, as every gentleman does and ought. If you are not content though, I'll throw you in young Foster into the bargain: he would join in the bond if you booked him up a trifle.

SIR SIMON. Oh Lord! Oh Lord! here's a scoundrel—Ruin my son too! (*Aside.*)

COUNTER. Dear, dear!—advance money to him also!

LUREALL. Aye to be sure; for when George succeeds his father, he can make ducks and drakes of the old Foster estate—can't he, Sir?

SIR SIMON. Make ducks and drakes of the old estate! (*Aside.*)—Why, Sir, would you have the heart to recommend him to sell that ancient inheritance?

LUREALL. Ha! ha! ha!—aye would I, were it twice as old and twice as large, though I am Sir Simon's friend.

SIR SIMON. I shall expire with fury!—the villanous highwayman! (*Aside.*)

LUREALL. Now then, my dear Counter, that the security is undeniable as you call it, you can hesitate no longer, therefore let me have my share of it to-morrow.

COUNTER. This gentleman has quite satisfied me, but—

LUREALL. Confound your buts—I must have it, so say no more. Many thanks, good Sir, for your very profitable information. (*to SIR SIMON.*)—Adieu, Counter! Cruikshanks, my compliments to all friends in Somersetshire. [*Exit LUREALL.*

SIR SIMON. Why am I prevented from blowing out the brains of that fashionable pickpocket? That I should have been his dupe!—my son too ruined by his pernicious counsels!—my niece's husband corrupted by him!—and my estate pledged before my face!!

COUNTER. A rare monopoly of crime indeed—a wholesale libertine!

SIR SIMON. I will hasten to my son and Lord Splashton, to unfold his interested views.

COUNTER. Your son may be saved perhaps—but if you took half Lombard Street under your arm, I fear it would not satisfy his Lordship's wants.

SIR SIMON. At all events we must destroy the power this serpent possesses over the minds of my relatives, and expose his artifices to the world.

COUNTER. Be careful.—Lureall stands at a high premium in society. *There* his creditor account for agreeability will overbalance by far his debtor side for roguery, because wit bears a better price than character among those whose only trade is, the purchase of new pleasures.

SIR SIMON. Then, Sir, Newgate and Botany Bay may be advertised for sale.

COUNTER. And the Penitentiary turned into a tea-garden. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

LORD SPLASHTON'S *House*.

Enter LORD SPLASHTON *and* *Servant*.

LORD SPLASH. Sir Simon called, did you say? By all means show him up, and inform Lady Splashton. Should any note come from Lady Mary Fretful, let me have it directly.

[*Exit* *Servant*.

A charming fine temper I am now in, to listen to long-winded arguments about economy and retrenchment, and such nonsense—owing tens of thousands without as many hundreds to pay them.

Enter *Servant* *and* LADY SPLASHTON.

LADY SPLASH. So then, my uncle has arrived. He certainly comes at a most inconvenient moment, just on the eve of my masqued ball. I am afraid I shall receive a never-ending lecture.

LORD SPLASH. Truly, my dear, there is no such undisputed bore as one's wife's relations. They consider themselves as licensed to tell one the most disagreeable truths.

LADY SPLASH. They are almost as insufferable as one's husband's friends, who abuse his wife to him, to show the interest they take in his happiness. It is a great pity that Sir Harry has not seen my uncle, to remove any unfavorable impressions he may have conceived respecting our domestic affairs.

LORD SPLASH. As to them, my love, you know we live as happily together—as—as

LADY SPLASH. As married people generally do.

Enter SIR SIMON.

SIR SIMON. My dear niece, I am charmed at meeting you again! (*Embraces her.*)—(*To him.*) My lord, I am delighted at seeing you.

LADY SPLASH. Indeed, uncle, I am quite delighted at your good-nature in visiting me.

LORD SPLASH. I hope sincerely, Sir Simon, that we shall be fortunate enough to possess you for some time.

SIR SIMON. No! no! London is no place for me. My rural habits never would suit your fashionable style of living.—Ah! I hear you lead a sad dissipated life!

LORD SPLASH. Oh dear no, Sir Simon! we are the most regular people possible. Why we always dine before eight, don't we, my love?

LADY SPLASH. Certainly, and are always in bed by two—on opera nights at least.

SIR SIMON. Regularity personified! You astonish me!—I assure you my chief business in town was to talk to you about your own affairs, and principally to warn you against Sir Harry Lureall.

LADY SPLASH. What, against my husband's *particular friend*, Sir Harry?

LORD SPLASH. He is my most intimate acquaintance, and a man of the strictest honour: is he not, my love?

SIR SIMON. Yes, when it suits his own convenience. Believe me, there is no design so black, or hypocrisy so deep, of which he is not capable.

LADY SPLASH. Indeed, uncle, no one condemns those vices more severely than Sir Harry.

SIR SIMON. In others, no doubt.

LORD SPLASH. I beg, Sir Simon, that you will not persist in this conversation : it hurts my feelings extremely, as well as my Lady Splashton's.

SIR SIMON. Zounds, my lord ! I know more of him than you imagine—I warn you against him. But as to your own affairs, I hear you are dreadfully in debt. Do let me entreat you to stop your extravagance before 'tis too late.

LORD SPLASH. That I owe money is perfectly true ; but were I to break up my establishment, I should have all my creditors tormenting me for payment, and the newspapers, under the head of “fashionable intelligence,” announcing my total ruin.

LADY SPLASH. And this house would be purchased for the red-armed wife of some city capitalist, who would glory in displaying herself from my opera-box ; while my grey curricula-ponies would be bought for some giggling French dancer.

SIR SIMON. It must come to that, if you persist. Why, proceedings are taken against you already. Let me persuade you to retire with me to the country, until you retrieve yourself.

LADY SPLASH. My dear uncle, that's impos-

sible ! I should expire under the weight of early hours and country neighbours !

LORD SPLASH. I could not think of taking any measures so destructive to Lady Splashton's health. Her constitution requires town air.

SIR SIMON. Your language and coolness under such circumstances astonish me.—Do, pray, hear reason.

LORD SPLASH. Seriously, Sir Simon, matters are not so bad as you apprehend. Stay with us a short time, and you will be convinced.

SIR SIMON. Well, well, I will, in the hopes of at last opening your eyes to your situation. I will now endeavour to find my son George. He leads, too, a regular life, I hear ; but I fear his pocket will soon demand a change of climate—not having received so much benefit as your Lordship's constitution has *from town-air* ! Oh ! oh lord !

[*Exit* SIR SIMON.]

LORD SPLASH. Really, my dear, your uncle's propositions are delicious. Retire to the country, turn squire, dig the earth, and drink ale !—ha ! ha !

LADY SPLASH. Upon my word, I expected he would have proposed to me to dress my own maid,

or make tea for my footman. Seriously, it charms me to find that we agree so well on this point. I think I never saw you looking so amiable in all my life.

LORD SPLASH. Upon my life, we were made for each other, I believe. We always did agree in every thing, and certainly always shall for the future. How beautiful she looks !

LADY SPLASH. Well then, let us vow never to suspect or be jealous of each other again—never to give the least cause for it either.

BOTH. Agreed ! agreed ! (*embrace.*)

Enter Servant—gives LORD SPLASHTON a note.

LORD SPLASH. Ah ! from Lady Mary ! (*Opens and reads.*)—(*Aside.*) “ I shall expect you, my dear Lord, at five, if you can tear yourself away from her Ladyship. Affectionately thine, MARY FRETFUL.”

(*Aside.*) To be sure I can, dear creature ! (*To Servant.*) Say, my compliments—Yes ! [*Exit Servant.*

LADY SPLASH. (*Aside.*) A note ! I wonder what it is about !—aye, or who it is from ! Oh, perhaps nothing ! but really I should like to know who sent it. Pray, my dear, is that note from Mr.—Mr. Counter ?

LORD SPLASH. Oh no, my love! This note is—is—from Sir Harry Flutter, about a shooting pony, so well trained that one may fire off its back.—Nothing that can interest you, my love.

LADY SPLASH. (*Aside.*) 'Tis from Lady Mary, I am sure. But I confess I am interested about the little animal—do let me see what he says.

LORD SPLASH. Ha! ha! Now you imagine, I dare swear, that it comes from some one else—ha! ha!—You are going to be jealous.—You forgot you vowed never to harbour such ideas, *my love*.

LADY SPLASH. And you, never to give cause for them, *my dear*.

LORD SPLASH. That's true: I should not object to your reading the note, only that it's giving you a *very bad habit*. I never could think of making such a request of you: I should consider a husband as mad, were he so unreasonable with his wife.

Enter Servant—gives LADY SPLASHTON a note.

(Exit Servant.)

LADY SPLASH. (*Aside.*) From Lureall. Ah, well, I think I have changed my mind.—Upon *general*

principles I agree with you. (*Opens and reads.*) "I will call in a few minutes and escort your Ladyship to Kensington Gardens. Lady Mary, with whom I now am, has just written to your husband to engage him at five; so we shall not be interrupted by him. Ever yours, HARRY LURE-ALL."—(*Aside.*) So his note is from Lady Mary!

LORD SPLASH. I wonder who the deuce that note is from! She reads it attentively. Oh! oh! she places it in her bosom! It must be from George Foster. (*Aside.*)—Hem! I am not the only one, I perceive, who receives notes; and though out of joke I might refuse to produce mine, yet you, my love, are so candid in every action, I dare say you will have no hesitation in showing yours.

LADY SPLASH. Certainly not, only it would be giving you a very *bad habit*, my dear. Mine is only about a currie-pony perfect in all his paces, and so timid, a lady may drive him—I dare say he is a match for yours.

LORD SPLASH. Confusion! she is ridiculing me! Beyond a doubt, Lady Splashton, I have no desire to see your note, that is evident; I cannot help, however, remarking that there is a wide

difference between a husband and a wife having correspondents.

LADY SPLASH. So it is considered in the code of nuptial laws, framed by gentlemen, whose fixed principles are, that they may amuse themselves to their hearts' content, while their ladies are only justified in sitting quiet and looking on.

LORD SPLASH. It does not appear, however, that your ladyship has any intention of becoming a tranquil spectator, according to the matrimonial act you have just quoted.

LADY SPLASH. (*Aside.*) Since he torments me thus, I am resolved to conquer. He dare not give up Lady Mary's note, therefore I am safe. Well then, my Lord, to prove how unfounded are your suspicions and jealousies, I produce my note. (*Holds it out.*) "You may read it, *on*—"

(*He seizes it, but holds it up. She screams and seizes his arm.*) —

Hold, hold, my Lord! hear, hear me! *On one condition* I said you might read it. As a man of honour, I trust to your not taking advantage of your unfair attack; if you do, all confidence between us is at an end.

LORD SPLASH. Name, then, the condition quickly—I—I will agree to it.

(She looses her hold.)

LADY SPLASH. That you surrender your note to me : that is but just, my Lord. *(sneering.)*

LORD SPLASH. *(Confused and aside.)* I am confounded. To give up Lady Mary's note is impossible, yet my desire to open her's!—No, no,—my only resource is to affect confidence, and obtain credit for my forbearance.

LADY SPLASH. He hesitates—I conquer. *(Aside.)*

LORD SPLASH. Ha! ha!—My love, I dare say you thought me serious. Ha! ha! I was merely in jest. *(Returns the note.)* The idea of my being jealous! Absurd!—No, I have too much confidence in you to entertain such unbecoming notions.

LADY SPLASH. *(Tears the note.)* Oh, I assure you you were perfectly welcome to have read it; though in returning it, did you not make a merit of necessity? *(throws the pieces at his feet.)*

LORD SPLASH. Very well, Madam, this is your return for my generosity. Oh woman!

LADY SPLASH. But I am detaining you. Lady

Mary, I think, in her note, rather expects you at five ;—it's now five.

LORD SPLASH. Confusion and madness! Deceived and laughed at! This is beyond bearing! Madam—I believe every thing—George Foster!—Yes, Madam, beware!—Confusion!—George Foster!

[Exit in a fury.]

LADY SPLASH. Bless me, what an escape, and what a victory! ha! ha! Yet what does his phrenzy mean! George Foster—my cousin too, against whom he is continually railing—surely he cannot be jealous of him. I see, alas! too clearly, that his heart is lost to me, and that Lady Mary reigns triumphant.

Enter FOSTER, dressed plainly.

FOSTER. Oh, my dear cousin, at last I have found you alone: but you seem agitated?

LADY SPLASH. I am indeed. You little dream of the conflicting tortures which drive repose from my breast. I am seriously to be pitied.

FOSTER. If it is from your husband's conduct you suffer, the duration will not be long; for believe me, Lord Splashton's heart is incapable of

injustice towards you, though sometimes he may err.

LADY SPLASH. I wish I could really think so.

FOSTER. Be assured it is so; but tell me, have you seen my father? I came to entreat you to persuade him not to torment me on the subject of the heiress, for you are aware of my attachment to Emily. Her I am resolved to marry at all hazards; and under the false name of Lord Henry Drummond, I have actually been accepted by Mr. Counter. Your masqued ball to-morrow night decides my fate.

LADY SPLASH. I tremble for your success; but your father has just left us, and unfortunately is much displeased with me for not retiring into the country with him. However, notwithstanding, I will do all in my power to assist you.

FOSTER. (*kisses her hand.*) Heaven bless you, thou best of good souls!

Enter LORD SPLASHTON.

LORD SPLASH. Before I go, Madam—Ha! Perdition and fury!—what, kissing her hand? I'll not bear this, Sir. I have now witnessed that

which I have long suspected. Your conduct is revolting. *Such a violation of hospitality, of friendship, and of relationship too, stamps the offender as the basest of criminals!*

FOSTER. (*astonished.*) In the name of heaven what can you mean?

LORD SPLASH. (*Turns to LADY SPLASHTON.*) As to you, Madam, the veil is now drawn aside. Denial and subterfuge are useless. That note—yes, I see it all—was to arrange this appointment.

FOSTER. Note! what note? Are you mad?

LORD SPLASH. No, Sir, not mad, but furious at the base acts you have practised. Let this, Sir, be the last time we meet. I insist upon your immediately leaving this house—I insist upon it—I will hear nothing.

[*Exit FOSTER, vainly endeavouring to expostulate.*

During this LADY SPLASHTON has remained motionless, casting a look of disdain.

What, Madam, cannot even detection move you to a sense of your shame? Is your mind then so depraved as to have become callous to disgrace?

LADY SPLASH. (*bursts out laughing.*) Ha! ha! ha! My dear good lord, your conduct is beyond

absurdity itself. Ha! ha! Go on—expose yourself more and more—there—there—

(LORD SPLASHTON *walks up and down in a fury.*)

Enter LUREALL.

LUREALL. (*Aside.*) What, another quarrel? I am delighted at this.

LORD SPLASH. My dear Lureall, what has just occurred—

LADY SPLASH. Now expose yourself before Sir Harry.

LORD SPLASH. Yes, Madam! when a wife forfeits all claim to her husband's esteem, where but in the heart of his friend is he to repose his confidence?

LUREALL. Your unhappiness quite overpowers me!

LADY SPLASH. His Lordship is frantic, because he found my cousin George kissing my hand—ha! ha!

LORD SPLASH. Your cousin George—confound such cousins! I am not to be laughed out of my senses by a tame cat of a cousin. No, Madam! (*Gravely to LUREALL*)—He was kissing her hand.

LADY SPLASH. (*Mimicking him.*) Yes, he was kissing her hand!

LUREALL. Is that all?—I'm rejoiced the wound is not deeper—ha! ha! But come, my good Lord, do not irritate yourself—it's very unwholesome: there must be some mistake. Retire into your room, and let me talk this matter over with her Ladyship.

LORD SPLASH. There was also a note, Lureall—

LADY SPLASH. Yes, there were two—were there not, my Lord?

LUREALL. Oh, I perceive there is a mistake, which I trust will not be cleared up. (*Aside.*) Let me beg of you to retire for a few minutes.

LORD SPLASH. Well, well, I will: but explanation is useless. Conviction is too deeply impressed on my mind. I saw him kiss her hand.

[*Exit* LORD SPLASHTON.]

LUREALL. Now, dear Lady Splashton, what is all this?

LADY SPLASH. Oh simply this: George Foster, while thanking me for interesting myself in his affairs with Emily Counter, kissed my hand—when my Lord entered and perceived it.

LUREALL. Ha! ha! excellent indeed! ha! ha!

LADY SPLASH. Ha! ha! It's too ridiculous. But there is something so insulting to a woman in being unjustly suspected.

LUREALL. Very true; it's a provocation no woman of spirit can or ought to brook.

LADY SPLASH. To attack me too at the moment he was corresponding with Lady Mary!

LUREALL. Thus adding injustice to injury. Oh where was thy guardian angel, when so lovely a being fell to the lot of one so unable to appreciate her value? Believe me, thou fascinating deity, (*kneels*) that, had I been that most fortunate—

LORD SPLASHTON *enters, stops at seeing LUREALL, who perceives him.*

Ha! your husband! Had I that—that—as I said before, had I been that fortunate person who married Lord Splashton, I should have discovered the excellent qualities of his heart; let me entreat you to adore his Lordship.

LADY SPLASH. But Lady Mary—

LUREALL. Don't mention her.

LORD SPLASH. (*comes forward.*) Ah, my dear Lureall, (*LUREALL rises*) 'tis no use your pleading

for me, even on your knees : she is beyond recovery. How shall I thank you for all your kind arguments ?

LADY SPLASH. Did you hear them all, my Lord ?

LUREALL. Oh his Lordship heard quite enough.

LADY SPLASH. If he had heard more, however, he might have been convinced of his mistake—eh, Sir Harry ? Do pray now call in Lady Mary to arrange this harmonious squabble : pray do, my Lord ! ha ! ha ! [Exit LADY SPLASHTON.

LORD SPLASH. Confusion ! This is not to be borne—such bare-faced impudence ! Oh, Lureall, she forces me to hate her against my will.

LUREALL. No doubt she has given you very serious cause of complaint, but I trust she has not carried her folly *too far*. She may have halted.—I grieve to think.

LORD SPLASH. Say no more, my worthy friend ; she is not deserving of my love. I will leave my house, and in Lady Mary's society endeavour to regain that peace of mind which is denied me at home. [Exit.

LUREALL. By all means do ;

(LUREALL *appears to follow, as if seeing him down
stairs.*)

while I will return and conclude my arguments
with Lady Splashton, &c. [*Exit on the opposite side.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

COUNTER'S house. *A door at the back ; a door on one side, being MRS. COUNTER'S room ; another opposite leading to the stairs.—(Stage dark.)*

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER, tipsy.

MAJOR. Steady! steady! What a devil of a house is this of ould Counter's! The floors keep merry-andrewing about like the sea when it's bothered by a swell, and the stairs is as rickety as a tipsy rope-ladder. Jenny! Jenny! I must see her immediately, or I'll not have my instructions for the masquerade to-night. I'll certainly make Emily Counter Mrs. Major O'Simper, before to-morrow morning. Jenny! Jenny!

(JENNY looks out of MRS. COUNTER'S room.)

JENNY. Who's that? Who is calling me?

MAJOR. It is I—I myself, I. I have brought Major O'Simper to see you.

JENNY. Oh, the Major! Bless me, I was just going out to you. How could you venture into this house again?

MAJOR. Why, finding the street door open, I asked my own leave—and walked in. Tell me, you little handmaid of Venus, does Miss Counter consent that I shall make her happy for time immemorial?

JENNY. She does. Now for my plan. (*Aside.*) She desires me to tell you that she will be dressed in a pink domino with a white rose in her bosom, to-night, at Lady Splashton's masked ball: she will join you on the first opportunity. You can easily slip out of the house in a mask, unknown, and by having a parson ready at some friend's house in the neighbourhood, settle the business at once—and then—

MAJOR. Leave the rest to me, you darling!—Oh Jenny, my jewel! kiss me for this news. Oh Jenny, if all ladies' maids were as handy as you, what a mighty convenience it would be to all mankind!—(*Aside.*) By my honour, I'll not marry

her without Counter's consent ; for in that case I'll lose all the fortune. Och ! wait awhile !

*(Noise heard outside the door at the back.
Bell rings.)*

JENNY. Away ! away ! The family are getting up from dinner : quick !

MAJOR. I believe I'll never find these dancing stairs. *(Goes to the door. Returns.)* Och ! murder ! here is a servant.

JENNY. Here, here ! get into Mrs. Counter's room. Lock the door, put on some disguise, and do not come out till I knock.

[Exeunt—the MAJOR into the room, and JENNY by the stair-case door, as the Servant enters with candles.]

Enter MR. and MRS. COUNTER, EMILY, and FOSTER dressed as LORD HENRY, from the door at the back.

COUNTER. Your Lordship is quite sure that you will not have any more wine ?

FOSTER. Many thanks—I prefer retiring with the ladies from the dining-room.

MRS. COUNTER. A foreign custom, which the

English ladies will thank your Lordship for introducing into London society.

COUNTER. Very true. Believe me, my Lord, that the gratification I feel this day at your Lordship's approaching marriage exceeds my power of expression ; but to convince your Lordship of my sincerity, I have sent to your solicitor Emily's portion of 30,000*l.* (*Gives a paper.*)

FOSTER. Sir, by my future endeavours to promote your daughter's happiness, I shall best prove to you my high sense of your liberality.

MRS. COUNTER. There, Emily, is a princely sentiment, worthy of the Duke of Dunbar himself ! What good fortune to have met so perfect a gentleman, and to have escaped that young Foster. Ha ! there is a horrid story about him in London.

EMILY. Good heavens ! what story ?

FOSTER. Rely upon it, Mrs. Counter, 'tis some unfounded malicious invention.

COUNTER. Oh no, my Lord. Mr. Foster is so very indifferent a character, that I can easily believe him guilty of any enormity. You don't know him as well as I do.

FOSTER. No, no, you are right—I do not know much of him. No! no!

MRS. COUNTER. Oh, he is too bad! This story has been hushed up, but a particular friend of the family's confided it to me. It appears that Mr. Foster has been endeavouring to gain Lady Splash-ton's affections—his own cousin! and he was actually discovered by his Lordship on his knees to her Ladyship.

EMILY. (*bursts into tears.*) Oh heavens! Oh!

(MR. and MRS. COUNTER and FOSTER in a fuss.)

FOSTER. Indeed, my love, 'tis untrue. Do not, I entreat you, believe it.—(*Aside.*) Heavens, she will betray me! (*Goes up.*)

MRS. COUNTER. Mercy on me, how the girl does expose herself! Indeed, my Lord, I am shocked at her. Emily! Emily!

COUNTER. Bless me, is the girl out of her senses? Lord Henry will be enraged and break off the match! Pray, my good Lord, do not mind her: she is apt to be overcome.—(*Aside.*) I shall have her returned on my hands as bad goods!

MRS. COUNTER. Oh yes, my Lord, Lady Splash-ton was a great friend of her's. Emily, are you mad?—thus to disgrace yourself!!

EMILY. I will hear nothing—

MR. and MRS. COUNTER. (*in a frenzy*) What can be done? all our hopes destroyed, exposed, disgraced!—Is she distracted? Lose all chance of the baronetcy?

(*During this FOSTER tries to pacify EMILY fruitlessly.*)

FOSTER. Calm yourself, my dear Mrs. Counter. I entreat you; Sir, not to make yourself uneasy on my account; I can make every allowance for Emily's feelings. Perhaps, were you to leave us alone, I might find some method to divert her attention from this unfortunate subject: do, I entreat, leave us.

COUNTER. We will. Your Lordship is too good.

MRS. COUNTER. Pray pardon her folly, my Lord, for I am satisfied that you alone possess her affections.

[*Exeunt MR. and MRS. COUNTER through the door at the back.*]

FOSTER. Good heavens, Emily, what can have tempted you thus to conduct yourself?

EMILY. Rather, Sir, let me ask you that question.

FOSTER. By all that's just, the story is totally false. 'Tis true, Lord Splashton did discover me kissing her hand merely, but I was invoking blessings on her for her kind feelings towards you; and slander has invented this falsehood.

EMILY. Are you quite sure of that, Mr. George?

FOSTER. May your lovely countenance never again smile on me, if 'tis not fact. 'Tis too absurd to quarrel now, when I have got the parson and special license ready to marry us the moment we can escape from the ball-room to-night.

EMILY. Pardon me, but the bare idea of your being false overpowered me.

(He kisses her hand.)

SIR SIMON. *(heard outside.)* Oh, they have left the dining room : then I shall go up stairs.

FOSTER. My father's voice ! I am lost ! Where shall I go ? *(Runs to the door at the back.)*

EMILY. Do not open that door—my father is there.—Here, here—*(tries MRS. COUNTER's door.)*
Ha ! 'tis locked !

FOSTER. What, no escape ? Heavens ! retire yourself, and keep your father engaged. I will trust to fortune to deliver me.

[Exit EMILY by the door at the back.]

Enter SIR SIMON.

FOSTER retires to the back of the stage.

SIR SIMON. Bless me ! at last I have arrived in a quiet peacable house, where I have a chance of a few minutes' tranquillity. The preparations for the masked ball to-night at my niece's have literally driven me out of the house : such knocking of workmen!—such swearing of cooks!—blaspheming in every language from low Irish up to high Dutch.

(During this FOSTER has put on MR. COUNTER'S great coat and hat.)

FOSTER. *(comes forward.)* Ah, my dear Sir, I did not expect to see you here.

SIR SIMON. What, George ! Where the devil do you come from, Sir ?

FOSTER. From visiting Mr. and Mrs. Counter. You desired me this morning, Sir, to leave my name, or see them if possible.

SIR SIMON. Ah, very good ! I wish you would live more with respectable families like this, instead of turning night into day at the clubs with a parcel of rakes.

FOSTER. How shall I escape ? *(Aside.)*—I have no

objection, I assure you, Sir, to pass my time with this respectable family, as you are so anxious, to *please you*, Sir.

SIR SIMON. Hold your tongue, you puppy! I have heard of your schemes; but as I want to talk to you on several points, get me a chair, and sit down yourself.

FOSTER. Oh heavens, if Counter should come in! (*Aside.*)

SIR SIMON. Get me a chair, sirrah! Why what a fuss you are in! What's the matter?—Halloo! what a figure you are dress'd!

FOSTER. Yes—no—Oh! neatness and simplicity is my only object. But I beg your pardon, Sir; I have a most particular engagement this evening. Allow me to wait upon you to-morrow morning.

SIR SIMON. No, no, Sir. The present moment is always the most suitable for business. Get a chair, Sir.

FOSTER. (*takes out his handkerchief.*) Oh Lord! Oh Sir, my nose—'tis bleeding!—very profusely too! I am very subject to it of late.

(*A crash heard in the room where the MAJOR is.*)

I'll return directly, Sir.

[*Exit* FOSTER.]

SIR SIMON. Come back, Sir, I say.—Halloo ! what a crash that was ! Why I left Lord Splash-ton's house on account of the noise, and it does not appear that I have improved my situation. It's the same in every London house, I suppose.

Enter COUNTER *from door at the back.*

COUNTER. I beg you a thousand pardons, my dear Sir Simon, for leaving you *alone*. I have only just heard you were in the house.

SIR SIMON. Alone ! Oh no, I was not alone. I was conversing with your young visitor ; his nose began to bleed : he has just left me.

COUNTER. (*Aside.*) Oh, he has been talking with Lord Henry Drummond. Well, he is a fine young man, and has all the characteristics of a gentleman in his appearance—eh, Sir Simon ?

SIR SIMON. Aye that he has. Take my word for it, there does not breathe a more gallant young fellow in all England : he's full of life and spirits, just as a young man ought to be.

COUNTER. So-so!—So, Sir Simon, you are, I perceive, perfectly acquainted with his character.

SIR SIMON. To be sure I am : devilish odd if I was not ; for I have known him ever since he was born.

COUNTER. Indeed !—(*Aside.*) I am quite surprised !

SIR SIMON. He is a little wild, however. Egad, so was I at his age, and he was always reckoned very like me. Don't you see the resemblance ?

COUNTER. No, no ! I cannot say I do.

SIR SIMON. No ! Oh you are no judge. In general it strikes every one at the first glance. His mother was indeed an angel : my admiration of her was only to be equalled by her attachment to me.

COUNTER. (*starts.*)—(*Aside.*) Mercy on me ! what does he mean by so palpable an insinuation ? Yes, yes, I always heard that she was a model of perfection.

SIR SIMON. True ; and her temper was so heavenly, I can safely say that I never once knew

her out of humour during the many years we lived together as man and wife.

COUNTER. Good heavens, Sir Simon!! Mercy on me!—you lived with her *as man and wife!!!* (*Aside.*) Does he mean to blast the Duchess of Dunbar's reputation?

SIR SIMON. To be sure I did—as surely as that young man is my son. Why what astonishes you so prodigiously?

COUNTER. *Your son, Sir Simon!*—Oh Sir Simon! Sir Simon! You are not serious—No, no, you mistake.

SIR SIMON. Mistake, Sir? What the devil do you mean? Do you doubt his being my son, Mr. Counter?

COUNTER. Since you force me to declare it, *I do, Sir*—I disbelieve it altogether.—And supposing that he was, it would be much more to your credit to conceal such an event, than thus publicly to boast of any thing so disreputable. Oh shameful!

SIR SIMON. Confusion and consternation! Look ye, Mr. Counter, we are old friends, but this is too gross an insult to be borne. Your insinuations are contemptible and unwarrantable, Sir!

COUNTER. Hold ! hold ! Sir—not unwarrantable. —Your surprise at my warmth will cease when I inform you that that *young man is to be my son-in-law*.

SIR SIMON. (*frantic.*) Your son-in-law !— Why, Sir, I have engaged him to *another lady*.

COUNTER. To another lady ! Sir, he is engaged to my daughter, and I have just given his solicitor the portion of 30,000*l.* Oh, Sir Simon ! your conduct in all this is too scandalous. You have forgotten yourself quite.

SIR SIMON. It's you who have forgotten yourself. This living with lords has turned your brain. He marry your daughter ? Did you not yesterday tell me that you had refused his proposals ?

COUNTER. No, Sir—I most positively deny it, —most positively, Sir !

SIR SIMON. Are you out of your senses ?—I am thunderstruck at your assertions.

COUNTER. Your attack upon my veracity, Sir, is unjustifiable. I declare solemnly that I never mentioned Lord Henry Drummond's name or his proposals to *you* in all my life.

SIR SIMON. I never said you did. In the name of wonder, what have I to do with Lord Henry

Drummond? I was talking about my son George and *his* proposals—*my son*, who has just left *this* room.

COUNTER. Oh, I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Simon! I see the mistake—ha! ha! Egad, I thought you were alluding to the Duchess of Dunbar and Lord Henry Drummond all this time—*my new son-in-law*.

SIR SIMON. Ha! ha! ha! this is excellent! Come shake hands—we were both right and both wrong—ha! ha!

COUNTER. With all my heart. But did you say that your son George had just left *this* room?

SIR SIMON. Certainly; what, do you still think *I don't know my own son*? After he had visited you and Mrs. Counter, I was conversing with him here for some time.

COUNTER. I never saw him, I assure you.—Oh this is some scheme of his to seduce my daughter from her duty; I see through it.—Mrs. Counter! Mrs. Counter!—Some plot, I am sure.

SIR SIMON. Aye, very likely. This accounts for his agitation, and his leaving me so suddenly—the rogue!

Enter MRS. COUNTER.

MRS. COUNTER. What's the matter?

COUNTER. Sir Simon has just informed me that young Foster has been in this very room under pretence of visiting us.

MRS. COUNTER. I never saw him, I assure you. He has never been near me, I promise you. —No! no! I will ring for all the servants, and inquire into this. (*She rings violently.*)

MR. and MRS. COUNTER. (*call out.*)—John! Thomas! David!

(*A crash heard in MRS. COUNTER's room.*)

SIR SIMON. I am stunned with the clatter! Another crash!—Why, that's the second I have heard from that room: all the furniture must be broken to atoms by this time.

MRS. COUNTER. Heavens! who can have caused all this damage?

COUNTER. What, don't you know who is in your own room, Mrs. Counter?

MRS. COUNTER. To be sure I do. (*Tries to open the door.*)—'Tis locked—ha! (*Knocks violently.*)

Enter the MAJOR tipsy, half disguised in woman's clothes, sword drawn. Enter the servants. Mrs.

COUNTER *screams*—SIR SIMON *and servants laugh.*

COUNTER. For ever and for ever that confounded Hibernian Major!

MAJOR. Murther! murther! What, the whole family! Are ye all tipsy? Stand out of my way, or I'll go clean through your battalions like a dozen of wine out of a twelve-pounder.

[*Exit MAJOR.*

MRS. COUNTER. I am distracted with astonishment! My reputation!—What can be the meaning of this?

COUNTER. Madam, if it's your trade to import Irish dragoons into my house, rely upon it you and your goods will soon form my first export commodities.

SIR SIMON. Ha! ha! ha! why this is more ridiculous than the cloak scene.

MRS. COUNTER. I insist upon knowing who admitted the Major into my room.

SERVANTS. Not I! not I!—we never saw him!

COUNTER. I desire to know who admitted Mr. Foster into the house also.

SERVANTS. We never saw him, Sir—not we!

MRS. COUNTER. We are betrayed!—deceived by every one in the house!

COUNTER. I'll have the house searched—I shall be robbed and murdered by these villains. Get out of my sight, you rogues! See after Emily, quick, Mrs. Counter!

SIR SIMON. Oh, John Counter! John Counter! why did you ever quit Threadneedle Street for St. James's Square!

[*Exeunt omnes severally.*]

SCENE II.

LORD SPLASHTON'S *House.*

Folding-doors at back.—Masqueraders pass and re-pass at back—Windows with curtains drawn—Music heard—knocking—lights—another room seen through folding-doors.

Enter JENNY.

JENNY. (*has a pink domino on her arm.*) So the company are arriving very fast. My mistress and all her family have been here some time. I shall seize the first opportunity to put on my domino

and mask, and secure my Major, who, I trust, has not yet recovered his senses.

Enter SIR SIMON.

SIR SIMON. Here I am again in my old quarters. However, Counter's house is more dangerous than this bedlam. I shall not get any rest to-night, I fear, from the riot of this silly ball. Well! I shall go to bed.—Ha! pray who are you?

JENNY. Miss Counter's maid, Sir.—I am come to attend upon the company, and to assist the ladies who may wish to change their characters.

SIR SIMON. Hem! change what they have not got.—I wish you joy of your sinecure employment!
[*Erit.*]

JENNY. What a surly old fellow! There seems to be a great crowd on the stairs.—I will mask and join them. (*She masks, &c.*) Now, Cupid, thou guardian angel of ladies' maids, assist and protect me! and if Jenny Trinket is not Mrs. Major O'Simper before day-light, may she die an old maid!
[*Erit* JENNY.]

Enter LADY SPLASHTON and LUREALL in dominos, unmasked.

LADY SPLASH. Oh, Sir Harry! Sir Harry! cease to irritate me farther. Alas! your predictions are too fully verified! Oh! did Lord Splashton but know how severe are the pangs he inflicts upon my heart, he would not thus torment me.

LUREALL. The more sensibly you feel his conduct, the deeper is the injury. Have you not this night seen him in your own house, nay in your very presence, attend solely to Lady Mary, and retire with her alone? Will you submit to such mortifying insults? Will you hear that he—

LADY SPLASH. Spare me the recital—I beheld it all. My misery can scarce be more complete.—
(*Sheds tears.*)

LUREALL. She is on the brink of jealousy's precipice! Now to hurl her down its frightful gulph! (*Aside.*) Away with tears and lamentations! Let loose your natural spirit!—let revenge fire your breast! Behold the man before you who pants to become your devoted slave—to fly to the world's end with you—who would sell his life to gain your heart.

LADY SPLASH. Are you aware, Sir Harry, that it is to Lady Splashton to whom you address such a proposition? (*with dignity.*)

LUREALL. *I am*—to her whose husband this night for ever quits the loveliest of womankind to throw himself at the feet of her rival!

LADY SPLASH. (*wildly.*) What do I hear? No, no! I will not—cannot believe it.

LUREALL. Then read this letter—(*gives it her.*) Lord Splashton's own hand-writing to Lady Mary, and be convinced.—(*Aside.*)—every word of which I dictated. Mark well where he swears eternal fidelity to her!—mark again where he vows to forget you!—and mark again where he curses his fate for having contracted an union which debars him from being united to her.

LADY SPLASH. Have mercy on me, heavens! (*half faints—LUREALL supports her.—SIR SIMON heard outside.*)

SIR SIMON. Who's there? Thomas! Thomas! a light!

LADY SPLASH. Sir Simon's voice! At what a moment!

LUREALL. Heavens defend me, your uncle!

Your agitation will betray you. Ha! company!
Conceal yourself for one instant here.

*(He puts her behind the curtain, and conceals himself
behind the other.—Masqueraders pass the folding-
doors behind.)*

Enter SIR SIMON.

SIR SIMON. Oh! there are lights here. Hem!
so the masqueraders are at some of their gambols.
Even in this room I saw them. Hem! well, as I
cannot sleep for the noise, I shall go to the library,
and get some books, and leave these good folks
to settle their own matters. [*Exit* SIR SIMON.]

LADY SPLASH. Can I escape now?

LUREALL. *(Goes to the door and returns.)* No, no!
here is your husband. *(hides again.)*

Enter LORD SPLASHTON and LADY MARY FRETFUL
in dominos, unmasked.

LORD SPLASH. The agitation of my mind but ill
accords with the gaiety of the evening. Ah! Lady
Mary, how much longer do you condemn me to
suffer in this state of tormenting suspense? It is

too cruel thus to treat so affectionate an admirer.

LADY MARY. Gently, my good Lord. Recollect you are not now wooing an unsuspecting novice, or a thoughtless woman, ignorant of the world's deceitful practices. Remember that I should have been your wife, had not Lady Splashton eclipsed me in your eyes. Think you, my Lord, that I, the victim of an unfortunate passion, cannot distinguish the difference between your caprice and my heart-felt love?

LORD SPLASH. Call not my adoration of you a caprice : you are unjust. Put my affection to the test, and my constancy shall prove the sincerity of my vows.

LADY MARY. Undeceive yourself, my Lord. I have too much pride ever to lower myself in the esteem of him I love by becoming his mistress—*never*, until marriage has united us.

LORD SPLASH. What can you mean ? You forget *my wife*.

LADY MARY. Your wife!—ha! ha!—you have no wife. She is lost to you for ever.

LORD SPLASH. Horror and dismay ! My wife

lost to me! Oh, no, no! she is innocent I am sure!

LADY MARY. (*Aside.*) He loves her in his heart, I am sure. Weak, silly man, know your situation. He whom you thought *your bosom friend*, has undermined you in Lady Splashton's affections.

LORD SPLASH. Who?—Foster?

LADY MARY. No—Lureall!

LORD SPLASH. Oh! monstrous villain!

LADY MARY. You observed them together all the night.—You saw them leave the room. They have fled, *never to return!*

LORD SPLASH. Then am I wretched for ever! Oh Maria, Maria, could you thus desert me? (*appears lost in grief.*)

LADY MARY. He is broken-hearted! I am amazed that Lord Splashton is not ashamed to shed those unmanly tears. What, weep for a woman who has abandoned you for another? Do you mean to be pointed at by the world as an object of derision?—to become the laughing-stock of London, and be treated with contempt by every woman you address?

LORD SPLASH. (*Appears buried in grief; then wild with contending passions, at last in a fit of rage and despair, throws himself at LADY MARY'S feet, saying, "I am yours, I am yours."*)

LADY MARY. I conquer—I conquer!

Enter SIR SIMON, and lets fall the books he has in his hand, &c.

SIR SIMON. Defend me, Providence! Oh my Lord, my Lord, this is abominable.

LADY MARY. Turn it into ridicule!

LORD SPLASH. (*Tries to laugh, but cannot.*) Oh, Sir Simon! We—I—that is, Lady Mary—we were only masquerading a little.

LADY MARY. Ha! ha! his Lordship was rather gallant—only in joke, upon my honour.

SIR SIMON. It astonishes me, Madam, that a lady of your distinction and education should permit a gentleman to act thus equivocally either in joke or in earnest. I had hoped, my Lord, that inconstancy did not form one of your failings. I trust Lady Splashton may not hear of it. (*going.*)

LADY MARY. Perhaps you, Sir, will be kind enough to inform her.

SIR SIMON. No, Madam! I hold the person who makes mischief between man and wife to be a pest to society. But are you sure you have not been overheard; for when I passed through this room a few minutes ago—egad, I saw some of the company masquerading a little too: and I suspect they are still within hearing.

LADY MARY. Rage and madness! have I betrayed myself? *(sinks into a chair, overcome.)*

SIR SIMON. Oh Lord! Oh Lord! the lady is fainting!—Here's a piece of work! What's to be done?

LORD SPLASH. Who waits? I am confounded! Water! water!

SIR SIMON. Air! air! Open the windows!

SIR SIMON *and* LORD SPLASHTON *run and tear aside the curtains.* LORD SPLASHTON *opens the one behind which* LADY SPLASHTON *is concealed* —SIR SIMON *the other.* LADY SPLASHTON *and* SIR HARRY *discovered.*

LORD SPLASH. My wife!—Merciful heavens! And you too Lureall! This is indeed a shock! Madam, am I in my senses?

SIR SIMON. This will break my heart!

LORD SPLASH. As to you, Sir, my revenge shall be instantaneous and dreadful; as to you, Madam—

LUREALL. Hold, hold! My good lord, there is no occasion for all this disturbance. Lady Splash-ton is perfectly guiltless—although, to be sure, the case has a peculiar tint. I alone am a little to blame.

LORD SPLASH. Explain it on the instant, Sir, or——

LUREALL. Easy —easy. Believe me, you shall hear every particular—although Lady Mary is present.

LADY MARY. What, would you betray me?—Contemtable coxcomb!

LUREALL. Ha! ha! why that's exquisite. Have you not already betrayed yourself?—has not that much-wronged lady overheard your own confession?

LADY MARY. That I had never out-lived this discovery! As to you, my Lord, let me recommend you, the next time you attempt to play "the double gallant," to endeavour to "know your own mind."

[*Exit.*

LUREALL. Do not annoy yourselves—it will all be forgotten in a week! The fact is, my dear Lord, false jealousy has been the sunken rock on which your remarkably frail bark nearly perished. Those little insinuations respecting George Foster were merely devices to disunite you and her Ladyship. Be assured, however, that if gentlemen will marry handsome ladies, and then neglect them—why—why—they must pardon their friends, if they show better taste than themselves. And let them thank heaven if they are fortunate enough to possess lovely wives so truly virtuous and attached as Lady Splashton. We shall all be very good friends again before the next Newmarket meeting.—Adieu!

[*Exit.*

LADY SPLASH. That gentleman has indeed told the truth; and though I sincerely deplore the distressing part I have acted in the occurrences of this night, still it is not without satisfaction that I reflect upon the grief of my husband evinced when he thought I had forsaken him.

LORD SPLASH. It was indeed most poignant; and since providence has this time protected us from the designs of our false friends and our own weakness, let us, by abstaining from the follies

and dissipation of London, prove the sincerity of our repentance and our gratitude for our preservation. (*Embraces her.*)

SIR SIMON. You do my heart good ; and if you will but retire with me to the country for a time, I shall for the future only look with a smile upon the dilemmas from which you have been rescued.

LADY SPLASH. We will consent most willingly.

Enter MR. and MRS. COUNTER, and masks.

MRS. COUNTER. Has any body seen my daughter ? I have lost her in the crowd. I cannot conceive what can have happened to her.

COUNTER. I have not seen her this half-hour. Has any body seen Lord Henry Drummond either ? He has disappeared.

SIR SIMON. We have had no society here excepting those whom I trust we shall never meet again.

Enter MAJOR O'SIMPER and JENNY masked.

MAJOR. Oh, ladies and gentlemen, I am highly pleased to find you all together. Give me joy— I am just going to be married, and allow me to present you Mrs. O'Simper.

OMNES. What, Major, going to be married !!!

MRS. COUNTER. I give you joy. Pray who is the happy lady?

MAJOR. Faith and honour, Ma'am, the lady whom I intend to make Mrs. Major O'Simper immediately, and who has solemnly promised to espouse me, is your own daughter.

COUNTER. Consternation! I shall lose my reason!

MRS. COUNTER. Gracious Heavens, I shall expire with fury! Emily cannot thus throw herself away! Speak, Emily!

MAJOR. Throw herself away! I'd have you to know, Madam, that the O'Simpers of Castle M'Garrett, County Tipperary, are descended from Cormack O'Neal, own cousin to Murrough O'Brien, King of Thomond, the terror of Munster!

SIR SIMON. There's ancestry for you, and royal blood into the bargain.

Enter FOSTER, in a domino, and EMILY masked, in a pink domino.

SIR SIMON. Oh, here comes my hopeful son. I wonder what he has been doing all this charming evening.

FOSTER. Only getting married, Sir. I beg you a thousand pardons.

SIR SIMON. Without my consent, Sir! And pray, who the deuce have you married?

FOSTER. You will forgive me, Sir, when you learn her name. I must trust to my future good conduct to pacify her parents; for whatever unpleasant feelings my deception of them may excite, my bride is Miss Emily Counter.

OMNES. Emily Counter? How is this?

MAJOR. You mistake, my dear Sir. I have been the same thing as married to your wife at least an hour ago!

MRS. COUNTER. This is most unaccountable. I am petrified!

COUNTER. In the name of wonder where is Lord Henry Drummond all this time? He is my real son-in-law.

SIR SIMON. Why, John Counter, you are a wholesale dealer in sons-in-law! Pray, ladies, explain.

EMILY. (*Unmasks.*) An humble suppliant, let me, my dearest mother, entreat your pardon. Mr. Foster was the object of my heart, and,—
and,—

SIR SIMON. So you married him.

MAJOR. And who the devil have I got here?

JENNY. (*Unmasks.*) Miss Jenny Trinket, who is *almost* Mrs. Major O'Simper. If you jilt me, I shall have a charming action for breach of promise, my love—ha! ha! ha!

MAJOR. Och! botheration! botheration! what an escape I've had!

OMNES. Ha! ha! ha!

FOSTER. Mr. Counter, I crave your forgiveness, not for marrying your daughter against your consent, for in the character of Lord Henry Drummond I received it. Believe me, that your daughter's happiness always shall be my future study.

SIR SIMON. Come, Mr. Counter, I am glad he has made so good a choice. Shake hands and sign their pardons : *the deed is done.*

COUNTER. With all my heart! he certainly has won her fairly. I am quite content.

SIR SIMON. Though Emily has not married a lord.

MAJOR. Nor I a lady's-maid.

JENNY. I beg your pardon; we are not quits yet, Major.

LORD SPLASH. I must also 'entreat pardon of George Foster for my ungenerous conduct towards him. And now allow me to offer these remarks to you—to you, and to all married couples, that the wife is the husband's best and truest friend—the husband the wife's legitimate, and most sincere adviser.—Let your mutual study be to please each other, and let honest confidence banish from your minds for ever the demon JEALOUSY.

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